OPINION: A BREATH OF FRESH AIR P.29 | FEATURES: XIAMEN'S YOUNG PROWESS P.38

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Cover Photo: The First Session of the 14th National People's Congress opens in Beijing on March 5 (XINHUA)

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Setting the Bar

Around 5 percent—this is the GDP growth target set by the government work report delivered at the opening meeting of the First Session of the 14th National People's Congress on March 5. The report also proposed targets of creating 12 million new urban jobs, maintaining the surveyed urban unemployment rate at around 5.5 percent and keeping the growth of the consumer price index at around 3 percent.

The projected target, higher than last year's GDP growth of 3 percent, is roughly on par with the country's average growth rate over the past five years, which stood at 5.2 percent. To complete the goals put forward in the Outline of the 14th Five-Year Plan (2021-25) for National Economic and Social Development and the Long-Range Objectives Through the Year 2035, a major policy document explaining China's strategic intentions, specifying the government's priorities and guiding plus regulating market entities, China must maintain a reasonable growth rate and prevent risks at the same time.

The annual GDP growth target should be set in line with the specific situation each year and focus on achieving sustainable, healthy economic development with improved quality and efficiency. The 5-percent target for 2023 is consistent with China's growth potential and means to ensure a stable economic performance and help create adequate employment opportunities. It is neither too fast nor too slow.

Since China adjusted its COVID-19 response policies in December last year, the Chinese economy has been ridding itself of the pandemic impact. Figures from the National Bureau of Statistics showed that in January, the purchasing managers' index for the manufacturing sector bounced back to 50.1, above the 50-point mark, which represents expansion. Building on this positive momentum, China is set to meet its annual target.

The international community is also confident about China's growth. In its latest World Economic Outlook report, published on January 31, the International Monetary Fund raised its forecast for the country's economic growth in 2023 to 5.2 percent, 0.8 percentage points higher than its forecast in October last year. This projection is higher than that of most other major economies, a sign China will continue to serve as a powerhouse in the global economy. **BR**

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POWERED UP

A view of the photovoltaic power station in Dalad Banner, Erdos, Inner Mongolia Autonomous Region in north China, on March 3.

Located in the eastern part of the Kubuqi Desert, the seventh largest desert in China, the power base has been constructed with an installed capacity of 1 million kilowatts, generating about 2 billion kWh of electricity per year.

The base has realized the utilization of clean energy while making sustainable use of the desert environment.

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A Highflyer

Staff members check a themed plane in the lead-up to the Third China International Consumer Products Expo at Meilan International Airport in Haikou, Hainan Province, on March 7. The expo will take place in Haikou from April 11-15. The major event provides a platform for the display and trading of consumer goods from China and abroad.

Travel Time

Immigration authorities across China had handled 39.722 million exits and entries since January 8 as of March 7, up 112.4 percent year on year, the National Immigration Administration (NIA) said on March 8.

China started managing COVID-19 as a Class B infectious disease on January 8.

NIA statistics showed that over 1.01 million exit and entry trips were recorded on February 25, the first single-day figure exceeding 1 million since 2020.

The number of inbound and outbound trips made by various means of transportation totaled 2.487 million in the same period, a year-on-year increase of 59.3 percent, the NIA said.

Immigration authorities across China issued over 3.36 million passports; over 12.67 million certificates for travel between the Chinese mainland and Hong Kong, Macao and Taiwan; and 122,000 visas, stay permits and residence permits for foreign nationals; up 1,220.9 percent, 837.7 percent and 33.1 percent, respectively, compared with the figures before China adjusted its COVID-19 management.

Power Grid Project

Construction of a high-cost 750-kilovolt ultra-high voltage power transmission and electrical substation project in Xinjiang Uygur Autonomous Region in northwest China got underway on March 7, the regional power supplier has announced.

The project has a total investment of 4.62 billion yuan ($662.97 million), the largest single investment in any power grid project in the region.

It will be built in Bayingolin Mongolian Autonomous Prefecture, and enter operation in 2025, according to the state-owned electric utility corporation State Grid's Xinjiang branch.

The project is expected to promote the interconnection of power grids in Xinjiang and its neighboring province Qinghai, supply power to a railroad connecting the two provincial-level regions and boost energy storage.

Senior Campus

China's senior citizens will have the opportunity to continue their education at a national-level university from the 2023 spring semester onward.

The establishment of the Seniors University of China (SUC) for the elderly is a concrete measure to address population aging in China and an important milestone in the reform and development of education for the elderly, Minister of Education Huai Jinpeng said at the inauguration ceremony on March 3.

The university provides students with courses on skills training, cultural heritage, social services, scientific research and international exchanges, and offers seniors nationwide both online and offline courses.

The SUC has fostered a national public service platform for elderly education, featuring 407,000 courses totaling 3.973 million minutes, offering high-quality resources to educational institutions for seniors across the country.

According to the university, people aged 50 and above can register online to enjoy free online courses. They can access the teaching platform via the website lndx.edu.cn, a related app as well as its Weixin mini program, a sub-application within the ecosystem of China's ubiquitous super app.

As stated above, the university also provides offline courses. At one of its campuses in Beijing's Haidian District, enrollment is underway for this year's spring semester, with 44 courses offered by six colleges. Registration started on March 3 and courses will start on March 20.

According to a document released by the State Council in August last year, the country aims to establish at least one

university for senior citizens in every county-level region by 2025.

New Air Route

China's Suparna Airlines has launched a new cargo air service linking the city of Nantong in Jiangsu Province with Leipzig in Germany.

On March 2, a Boeing 747 freighter of Suparna Airlines landed at Nantong Xingdong International Airport, marking the completion of the first round-trip between Nantong and Leipzig.

It is Nantong's first regular intercontinental all-cargo air route, with one or two weekly flights.

The freighter carried 115 tons of commodities worth over 30 million yuan ($4.3 million) during the first round-trip.

In recent years, Nantong has opened eight international all-cargo air routes reaching 10 destinations, including Hanoi, Incheon, Tokyo, Osaka and Singapore.

Social Order

China effectively curbed serious violent crimes and crimes related to guns, explosives and drugs over the past five years, a work report of the Supreme People's Procuratorate said.

No fewer than 814,000 people were prosecuted over such crimes during the period, a drop of 31.7 percent from the previous five years, the report, submitted for deliberation on March 7 to the national legislative session, said.

In particular, the number of prosecutions over homicide, arson, illegal use of explosives, kidnap, robbery and theft in 2022 fell to the lowest level in nearly two decades, the report said, adding the declines point to a continuous improvement in the country's social order.

This has brought the people a strong sense of security, the top procuratorate said.

Hugo Awards Nominations

Nominations are open for the 2023 Chengdu World Science Fiction Convention (WorldCon) Hugo Awards, the organizing committee of the convention said on March 1.

The Hugo Award is an annual literary award for the best science fiction or fantasy works and achievements of the previous year, extended at the WorldCon and chosen by its members. The Hugo is widely considered the leading award in science fiction.

The nominations cover 19 categories, including 17 Hugo award categories such as Best Novel, Best Novella, Best Novelette and Best Short Story, and two other award categories—Lodestar Award for Best Young Adult Book and Astounding Award for Best New Writer, according to the selection committee.

Nominations for the awards will remain open until 4:59 p.m. on May 1. The shortlist for the awards is expected to be announced in late May.

The convention, organized by the World Science Fiction Society, has taken place annually since 1939 (except during World War II from 1942 to 1945).

Chengdu has made great efforts in recent years to develop its sci-fi culture industry and establish itself as China's science fiction town. It was selected to host the 2023 WorldCon in December 2021.

XINHUA

All Hail the Queen

A spinning top competition in celebration of International Women's Day (on March 8) is in full swing in Renliang Village of Dahua Yao Autonomous County in Guangxi Zhuang Autonomous Region on March 5.

XINHUA

A Pretty Picture

A visitor snaps some floral shots at a flower expo inside a park in Shenzhen, Guangdong Province, on March 8.

Forex Reserves

China's foreign exchange (forex) reserves came in at more than $3.13 trillion at the end of February, according to the State Administration of Foreign Exchange.

The U.S. dollar index increased and the prices of global financial assets generally fell that month, affected by global macroeconomic data and monetary policy expectations of major economies. China's forex reserves fell due to the combined effects of currency translation and asset price changes, according to the administration.

Forex reserves are expected to remain generally stable thanks to China's efforts to promote steady economic recovery and high-quality development, as well as the great potential and impetus for the development of the Chinese economy, it added.

Trade in Goods

China's exports of goods rose 0.9 percent year on year during the first two months of the year to 3.5 trillion yuan ($502.6 billion), hitting a new high, official data showed on March 7.

The country's foreign trade of goods edged down 0.8 percent year on year to 6.18 trillion yuan ($887.4 billion) in the same period, according to the General Administration of Customs of China. Imports of goods stood at 2.68 trillion yuan ($384.8 billion) in the period, down 2.9 percent year on year.

Trade surplus hit 810.32 billion yuan ($116.4 billion) in the period, jumping 16.2 percent year on year, the data showed.

In the first two months, the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) remained China's largest trading partner. Bilateral trade rose 9.6 percent year on year to 951.93 billion yuan ($136.7 billion), accounting for 15.4 percent of the country's total.

Imports and exports with countries along the Belt and Road routes climbed 10.1 percent year on year to 2.12 trillion yuan ($304.4 billion), driving the overall foreign trade growth up by 3.1 percentage points in the first two months.

The country's trade with other members of the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership rose 3.1 percent during the same period.

In the first two months, imports and exports of private enterprises went up 5.3 percent year on year to 3.16 trillion yuan ($453.8 billion), accounting for 51.2 percent of the country's total.

Imports and exports of central and western regions surged 12.1 percent year on year in the first two months, accounting for 19.2 percent of the overall trade volume, the data also showed.

Road Logistics

The road logistics price index went up in February amid a sound recovery of the transportation sector, industry data showed.

The index came in at 103.4 that month, up 5.2 percent year on year, according to a survey jointly conducted by the China Federation of Logistics and Purchasing and Guangdong Lin'an Logistics Group.

It attributed the price growth to the stronger vitality of market entities and better market supply and demand as the country's economic operation continuously improved.

The survey was also upbeat about the future performance of the sector, emphasizing the further expansion of domestic demand amid China's strong economic rebound.

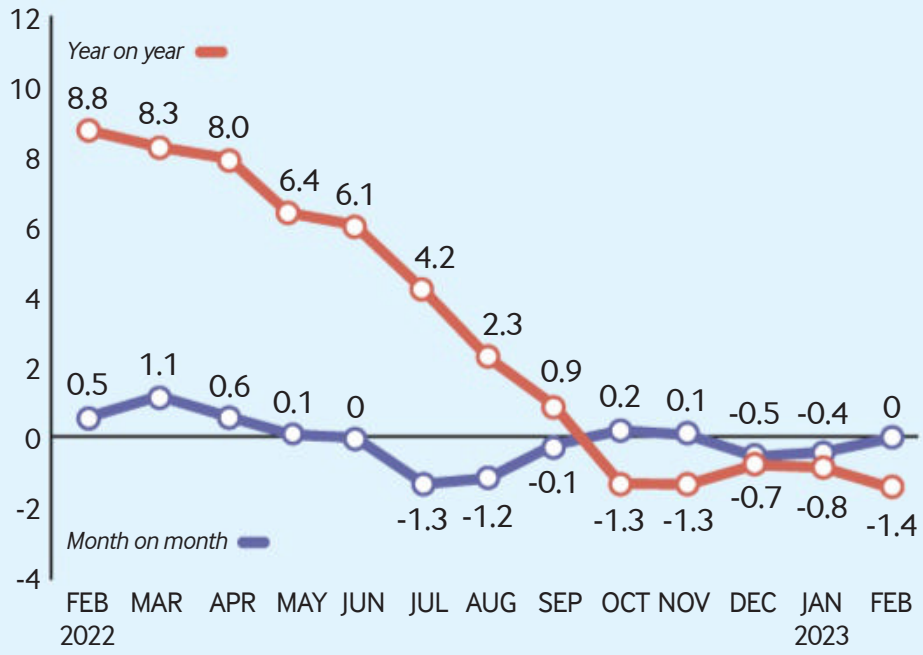
National Standards

China had established more than 42,000 national standards as of late 2022, data from the State Administration for Market Regulation showed.

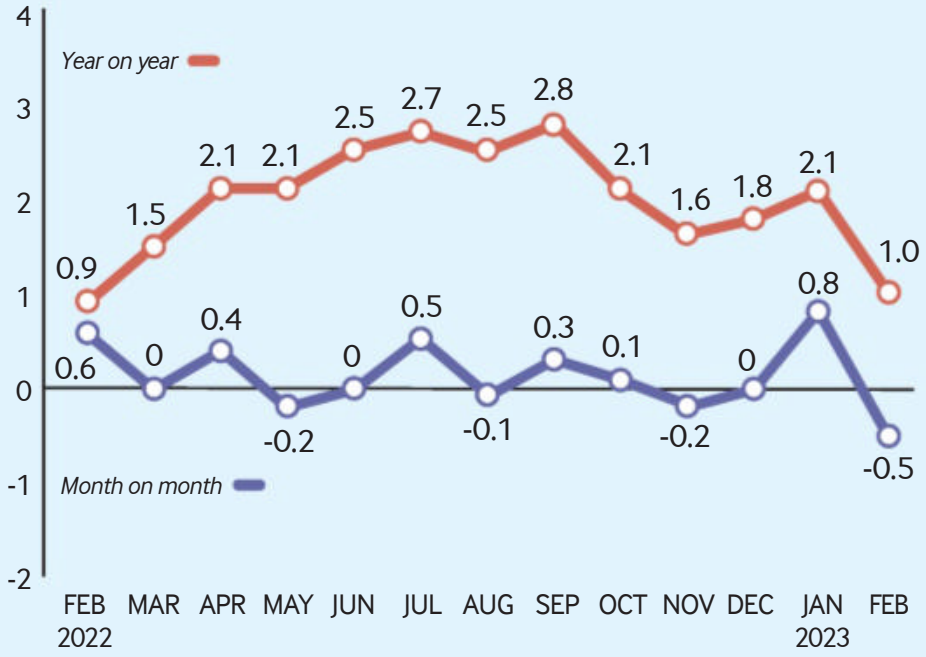
By the end of last year, more than 78,000 industry standards, more than 62,000 local standards, and over 2.6 million

NUMBERS

China's Producer Price Index Growth
(%)



China's Consumer Price Index (CPI) Growth
(%)



enterprise standards had been put on record in the country, the data showed.

China will align domestic standards for major consumer goods with international ones, develop quality classification standards for household appliances, furniture and clothing, and promote the formulation of standards in the fields of cosmetics and sports equipment, according to the administration.

More efforts will go into the formulation of food quality standards for healthcare products and enhance their coordination with national food safety standards, it added.

Green Hotels

According to a report released by the China Hospitality Association, the country currently features over 1,500 green hotels.

Green hotels refer to accommodation that adheres to green management, advocates green consumption, protects the ecology and rationally uses natural resources.

China's accommodation and food and beverage industries made progress in addressing food and beverage waste and promoting green consumption in 2022 despite the impact of COVID-19, the report said.

Compared to traditional hotels, last year, green hotels saved an average 15 percent of electricity and 10 percent of water, and their revenues increased by 12.08 percent, the report showed.

China-Europe Freight Trains

Erenhot Port in Inner Mongolia Autonomous Region in north China has logged over 500 China-Europe freight trains so far this year, local railway authorities said on March 6.

Since the beginning of the year, in the face of continuously increasing transportation demand and strong growth in imports and exports, the Erenhot Port has opened a "green channel" for the operation of China-Europe freight trains, resulting in a 20-percent increase in the capacity of container transportation for the service, Qin Zhicang from the China Railway Hohhot Bureau Group Co. Ltd. said.

The Erenhot Port is the largest land port between China and Mongolia, through which 64 China-Europe freight train routes link China with more than 60 regions of over 10 countries, including Germany, Poland and Mongolia.

5G Base Stations

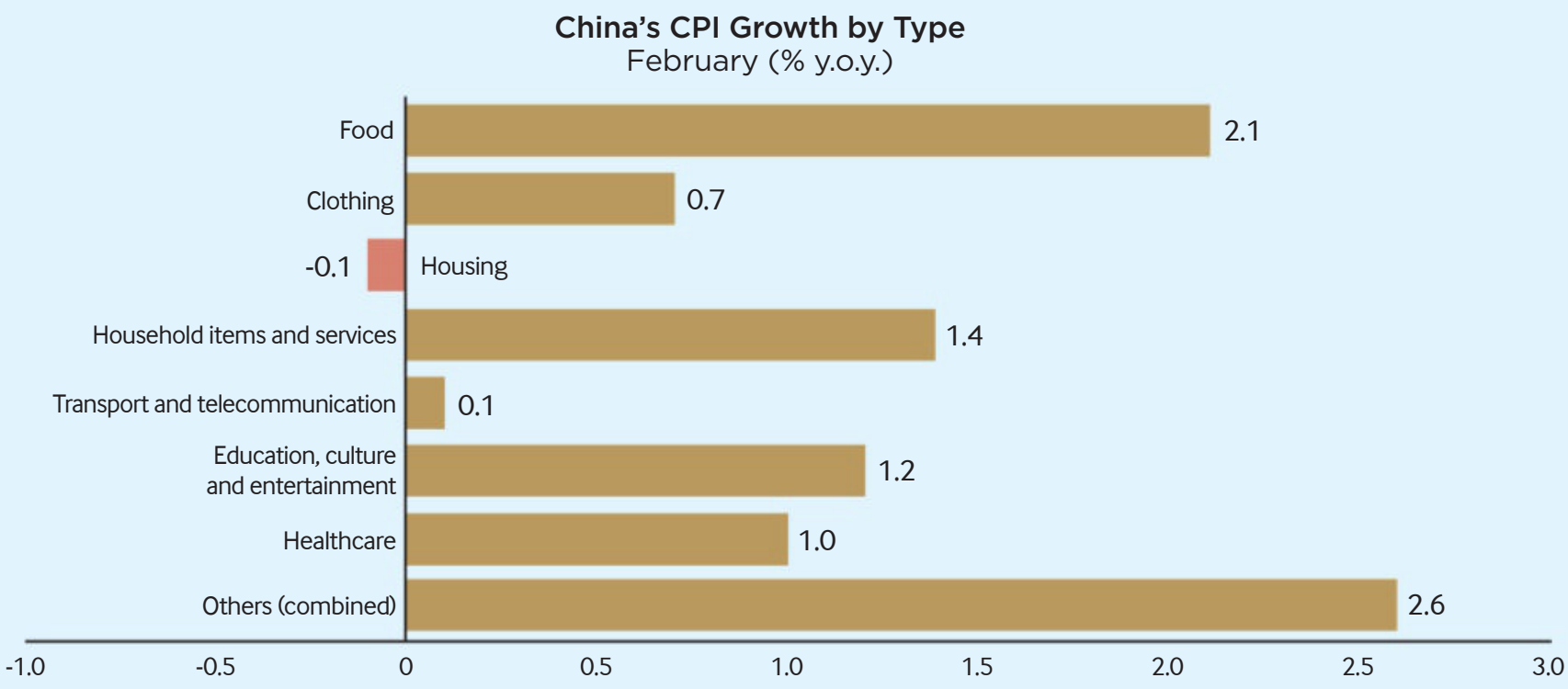
China will have built over 2.9 million 5G base stations by the end of 2023, Minister of Industry and Information Technology Jin Zhuanglong said on March 5.

The country plans to add around 600,000 such stations this year and expand the coverage of 5G services in rural areas and industrial parks, Jin told journalists on the sidelines of the Two Sessions, the annual meetings of the National People's Congress and the National Committee of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference that ran from March 4 to 13 this year.

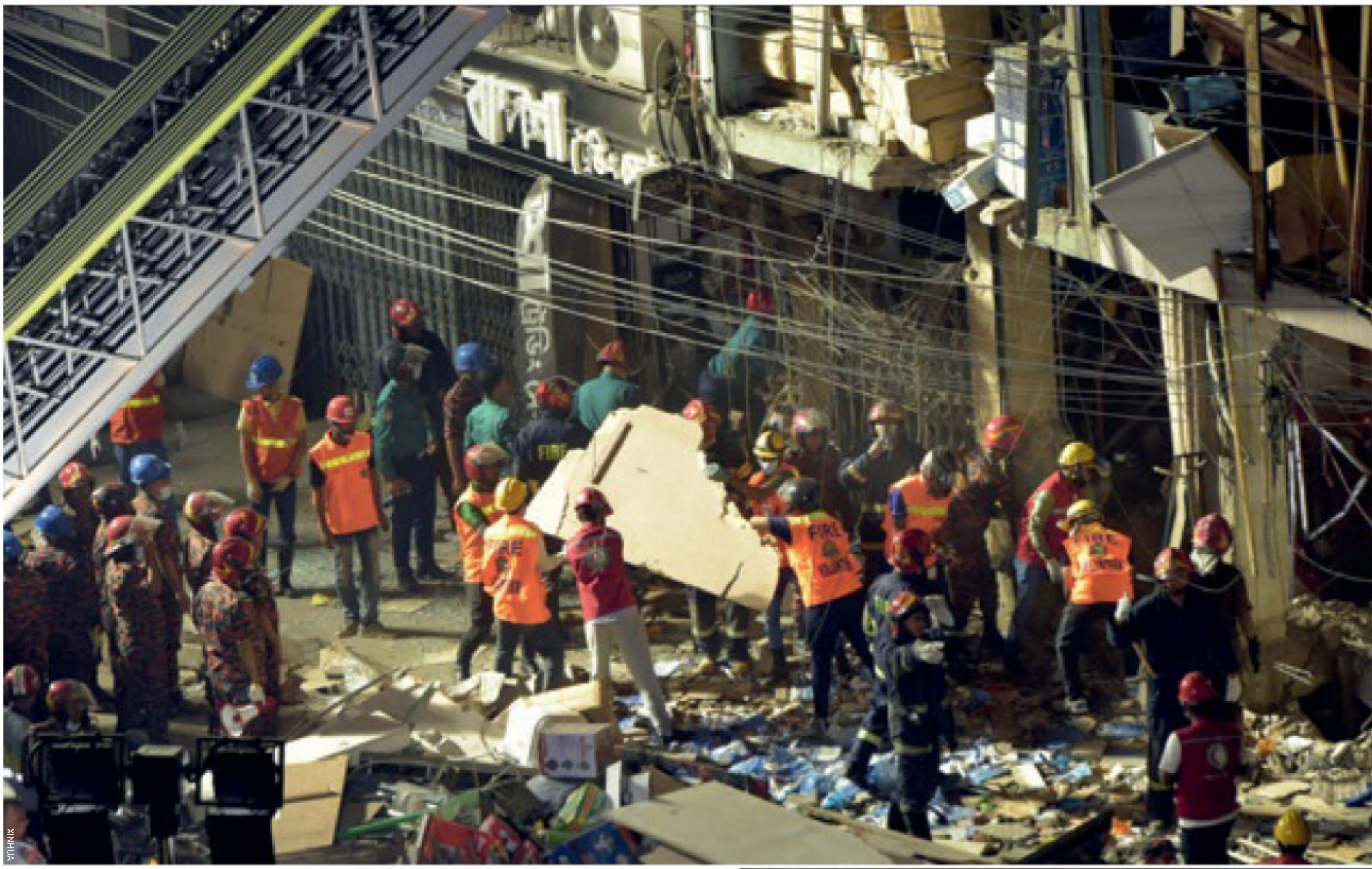
China now has over 2.34 million 5G base stations and the number of 5G cellphone users has surpassed 575 million, according to Jin, noting that 5G technologies are widely applied in the economy, most prominently in the sectors of mining, power supply and trunk jetliner production.

Jin said efforts will be made to promote the industrial application of 5G, especially in manufacturing, with plans to build more than 10,000 5G-enabled factories during the 14th Five-Year Plan (2021-25) period.

Research and development of 6G wireless technologies will also accelerate, drawing on the advantages of China's super-large market and full-fledged industrial system, Jin added.



(Source: *National Bureau of Statistics*)



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BANGLADESH

Rescue personnel work at the site of a massive explosion inside a commercial building in Dhaka on March 7. At least 16 people died in the blast, with many more injured

NEPAL

Revelers smeared with *gula* or colored powder take selfies during the celebration of Holi, a festival that marks the arrival of spring, at Patan Durbar Square in Lalitpur on March 6

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UNITED NATIONS

Secretary General António Guterres addresses the opening of the 67th Session of the UN Commission on the Status of Women at the UN headquarters in New York on March 6, calling for more action to close gender gaps in science, technology and innovation

ITALY

A visitor holding a sign reading "But I like it!" sits next to Grouchy Smurf, one of the main characters in *The Smurfs* comic book series, in Bologna on March 7 at the 60th Bologna Children's Book Fair. The event ran from March 6 to 9

XINHUA

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UNITED STATES

Federal Reserve (Fed) Chair Jerome Powell appears before the U.S. Senate Banking Committee in Washington, D.C. on March 7 as part of his semiannual monetary policy testimony before Congress. He said the Fed would have to raise rates to higher levels if the incoming economic data remained strong

GERMANY

The Mexico booth at the ITB Berlin travel trade show, the largest of its kind in the world, in Berlin on March 7—the show's opening day. The fair concluded on March 9

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RACE WALKER SETS NEW RECORD

Race walker **He Xianghong**, 24, dominated the men's 35-km race and improved the Asian record by 20 seconds during the opening leg of the Chinese National Race Walk Grand Prix, held in Huangshan, Anhui Province, on March 4.

He maintained a fast and steady pace throughout the race and continued to extend his lead before wrapping up the overwhelming victory in two hours, 22 minutes and 55 seconds. His winning time not only shattered his own national record of 2:24:45, but also beat the Asian record of 2:23:15, set by Japan's Masatora Kawano at the 2022 World Athletics Championships in Eugene, Oregon, the U.S., and is 19 seconds faster than Italian world champion Massimo Stano's winning time at that event.

He's win was selected by World Athletics, the international governing body for the sport of athletics, as one of the world's best performances of the week from February 27 to March 5.

Sustainable Growth

People's Daily
March 2

Plastic pollution is a major challenge facing the globe and fast-growing, renewable and biodegradable bamboo is rising as a greener alternative in multiple fields, including packaging, architecture, transportation and chemical engineering.

The extremely versatile material can be used for just about anything. A bamboo straw never gets soggy in liquid as paper straws often do. Advanced bamboo winding technologies are now used to produce highly elastic and durable pipelines. The incredible stability of bamboo flooring makes it an ideal component of shipping containers.

Home to the world's richest bamboo resources and most developed bamboo industry, China has closely worked with the International Bamboo and Rattan Organization to launch and promote the Bamboo as a Substitute for Plastic Initiative, an action plan that encourages countries to address climate change by replacing plastic with bamboo.

Despite its many wonderful abilities, bamboo is yet to be widely accepted as the best alternative to plastic. The bamboo industry should focus on building up core technologies, which will then help produce a new breed of affordable and high-quality bamboo products.

A Big Ship for a Big Market

China Newsweek
December 20

China is counting down to the debut of its first large, domestically made cruise ship, the H1508, a 135,500-ton vessel that will undock in May and embark on its first trial voyage in July. Extremely complex in their construction, large cruise ships are known as one of the three "pearls in the crown" of the shipbuilding industry, alongside aircraft carriers and liquefied natural gas carriers. The completion of the H1508 will be a critical moment in China's endeavor to establish an independent shipbuilding industry.

Large cruise ships are a sector long

"We're witnessing ongoing progress in the number of women in politics this year, which is encouraging. However, we still have a long way to go to reach gender equality when we see the current rates of growth."

Martin Chungong, Secretary General of the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU), as the IPU and the UN Women jointly released a report on women in politics on March 7

"Let's unite a divided world with a COP of solidarity, a COP of action and a COP for all."

Sultan Al Jaber, President-Designate of the UN's COP28 climate conference to take place in the United Arab Emirates in November, in a keynote address at the CERAWeek on March 6

ruled by European shipyards and only entered China in 2006, the year in which the *Costa Allegra*, a cruise liner owned by the Italy-based giant, Costa Cruises, first arrived in Shanghai. The following decade saw astounding growth in the country's cruise market, as a bevy of international cruise lines, some even custom-designed for Chinese customers, targeted the country's coastal cities such as Shanghai, Tianjin, and Xiamen, which have all constructed their own home ports.

As of now, China has become the second largest market for cruise tourism, next only to the United States. The surge in domestic consumer demand has pushed the country to build its own large cruise ship, a project that officially began in 2013. To bring this gigantic vessel to life, engineers from China State Shipbuilding Corporation, a conglomerate of Chinese shipbuilders, have accomplished a major technological overhaul of the entire production process, from initial design to manufacturing and finally to cruise line management and operations.

Hopes are high that the ship's debut will help drive the country's maritime economy by bringing positive changes to not only ship and home port construction, but also sectors such as retail, hotels and entertainment.

On Track

Economic Daily

March 5

After three long years of absence due to the COVID-19 pandemic, marathon events have finally returned to China, with many cities recently announcing their race schedules.

The marathon is no longer just a sports event, but a market that integrates sectors including food and beverages, accommodation and sportswear. New sportswear brands fueled by cutting-edge technologies and sophisticated designs are constantly reshaping the apparel industry and breaking the boundaries between function and fashion. The increasing popularity of marathon events has also spurred the rapid growth of the souvenir industry, as collecting souvenir medals and trophies has become a fashionable hobby among professional and amateur runners alike.

Winding through many of the world's famous sights and wonders, marathon races are one of the best advertisements for their host cities. Many Chinese cities seeking to bring tourists back have created culturally distinct routes that take participants through some of their most spectacular sceneries. Some cities have further pushed the envelope by organizing creative running events such as the breakfast run, a warm-up run prior to the big race that always concludes with hearty breakfasts featuring local delicacies.

PIONEER RESEARCHER IN RADAR DIES AT 84

Wang Xiaomo, one of China's most renowned radar researchers and known as the father of China's early warning aircraft, passed away on March 6.

Born in Shanghai in 1938, Wang graduated from the Radio Engineering Department of the Beijing Institute of Technology in 1961, before beginning his career as a radar designer.

From the mid-1990s to the early 2000s, Wang focused on the research and development of the country's first domestic early warning aircraft system. He was the chief designer of the ZDK03, the first Chinese early warning aircraft specifically developed for export.

In 2013, Wang, also a member of the Chinese Academy of Engineering, received the State Scientific and Technological Award, the highest honor for Chinese science and technology workers. He was also a deputy to the National People's Congress, China's top legislature, from 2003 to 2013.

"Many of these countries are very dependent on exports to China. That is why the Chinese economy's performance is strategic."

Eduardo Regalado, a researcher with the International Policy Research Center of Cuba, in a recent interview with Xinhua News Agency

"The rise of China into a global economic powerhouse came to offset a long held notion that Western modernization was the epitome of global pursuits."

David Monyae, Director of the Center for Africa-China Studies at the University of Johannesburg in South Africa, in a recent interview with Xinhua

COVER STORY

A BALANCED AGENDA

The Chinese path to modernization requires high-quality development By Ji Jing

XINHUA

President Xi Jinping attends the opening meeting of the First Session of the 14th National People's Congress (NPC) with other leaders at the Great Hall of the People in Beijing on March 5

China has set its GDP growth target at around 5 percent for this year. The target was revealed in the government work report delivered by Premier Li Keqiang at the opening meeting of the First Session of the 14th National People's Congress (NPC), China's highest state organ of power, in Beijing on March 5.

The growth target of around 5 percent "is necessary to ensure stable growth, employment and prices," according to a report on the implementation of the 2022 plan and the draft of the 2023 plan for national economic and social development, submitted by the National Development and Reform Commission (NDRC), the country's top economic planner, on March 5.

"It will be a positive signal to the market and will bolster confidence, guide expectations, expand employment, improve living standards, and prevent and defuse risks while pursuing development," the NDRC report said.

This year's GDP target is also consistent with the growth potential of the Chinese economy at present and with the capability of resources and production factors to support the economy, according to the report.

"This suggests the government's focus is on high-quality economic growth. I believe this target is achievable," Yu Miaojie, President of Liaoning University and a deputy to the 14th NPC, told *Beijing Review* while attending the annual legislative session in Beijing, which concluded on March 13.

"The growth target is achievable in light of China's average annual GDP growth rate of 6.2 percent in the past 10 years. Also, as the country has adjusted pandemic control measures, its economic vitality will be unleashed and the economy will see a recovery," Jin Li, Vice President of the Southern University of Science and Technology and a member of the 14th National Committee of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference, the top political advisory body, told *People's Daily*.

In January, the International Monetary Fund (IMF) raised its forecast for China's economic growth to 5.2 percent in 2023, up 0.8 percentage points from its projection in October last year, as it said the country's reopening has▶▶

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President Xi Jinping attends a joint group meeting with national political advisers from the China National Democratic Construction Association and the All-China Federation of Industry and Commerce on March 6

paved the way for a faster-than-expected recovery. Pent-up demand could also fuel a stronger rebound in China, the IMF said in its World Economic Outlook report released in January.

China's economic rebound is having a significant positive spillover effect on the regional growth of Asia, Krishna Srinivasan, Director of the Asia and Pacific Department of the IMF, said.

Srinivasan further said during the International Finance Forum One-on-One Global Dialogue on March 3 that a 1-percentage-point increase in China's growth leads to a 0.3-percent growth in output level across Asia.

A pickup in China's tourism has "had a huge impact" on countries like Thailand and Viet Nam, he said, adding that recovering consumption in China will boost the exports of its trading partners in the region.

Xulio Rios, a Spanish author and adviser emeritus of the Chinese Policy Observatory website, told *Beijing Review* that the 5-percent growth target is pragmatic but not easy to achieve. China still needs to confront a complicated international situation, the influence of the COVID-19 pandemic as well as challenges in its transition to a new growth model. In spite of many uncertainties, the Chinese economy has shown great resilience and its sound growth is important for the global economy to return to normal in the post-pandemic era.

Promoting growth

This year, China aims to create around 12 million new urban jobs, with a surveyed urban unemployment rate of around 5.5 percent, according to the government work report. Other annual objectives include keeping the consumer price index increase at around 3 percent and grain output above 650 million tons.

The report unveiled a raft of measures to shore up growth this year, including a projected deficit-to-GDP ratio of 3 percent, 0.2 percentage points higher than the level last year, and 3.8 trillion yuan ($545.7 billion) of special-purpose bonds to be allocated to local governments.

To expand domestic demand, the government will prioritize the recovery and expansion of consumption, and improve the incomes of urban and rural residents, the report added.

China's final consumption expenditure contributed more than 50 percent to domestic economic growth in 2022, which is low compared with developed countries. Therefore, China still needs to expand domestic demand and stimulate consumption.

Yu suggested the government step up policies to support the real economy, narrow the urban-rural gap in infrastructure, and increase tax and fee cuts to expand domestic demand. He also said manufacturers should be encouraged to move up to

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Deputies take questions from reporters during the First Session of the 14th NPC in Beijing on March 7

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Staff members of the General Office of the State Council sort through suggestions from deputies to the NPC and members of the National Committee of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference (CPPCC) collected through multiple channels on March 5. The suggestions will be passed on to the related government departments for review and feedback

the higher ends of industrial chains.

"The government should boost the consumption of big-ticket items like cars and home appliances, advance the development of convenience stores in urban communities, improve logistics services in rural areas, and support the tourism industry as people's desire to travel returns," he said.

High-quality development

In addition to measures aimed at bolstering growth, the government work report has underlined the importance of high-quality development in economic growth.

Liu Tao, Vice President of Zhixin Investment Research Institute, told *China Newsweek* that this year's report has given more emphasis to green and low-carbon development. The report has vowed to continue the transition to green development, improve the quality of the ecological environment and advance energy conservation and carbon reduction in key areas. "High-level environmental protection will not hinder economic growth but add new engines to growth instead and promote high-quality development," Liu said. ▶▶

President Xi Jinping, also General Secretary of the Communist Party of China Central Committee and Chairman of the Central Military Commission, said that high-quality development is the top priority in transforming China into a modern socialist country in all respects. He made the remarks on March 5 during a deliberation with deputies from the delegation of Jiangsu Province at the First Session of the 14th NPC. Xi is one of the deputies in the Jiangsu delegation.

Xi added the country must fully and faithfully apply the new development philosophy on all fronts, and as far as understanding, assessing and promoting development is concerned, people must make sure that the development is innovative, coordinated, green, open and for everyone in a well-integrated manner.

"A better balance must be maintained between effective rise in quality and reasonable growth in quantity, with quality first and priority given to economic and social benefits," he said. "We must stay committed to deepening reform and opening up, further transform the growth model, and work for better quality with higher efficiency and more robust drivers of economic growth through reform, so as to accelerate the development of institutions and mechanisms for sustainable high-quality development," he added.

Xi pointed out that the nation must speed up efforts to achieve greater self-reliance and strength in science and technology to promote high-quality development. "Facing fierce global competition, we must open up new areas and new tracks in development and foster new growth drivers and new strengths, which, fundamentally, depends on sci-tech innovation," he said.

Xi pointed out that accelerating the creation of a new development pattern is the strategic foundation for promoting high-quality growth. "We should make sure that our implementation of the strategy to expand domestic demand is integrated with our efforts to deepen supply-side structural reform, and move faster to modernize the industrial system... We need to advance new industrialization, intensify efforts to reengineer the industrial foundation and tackle key issues in major technologies and equipment, so as to make the manufacturing sector high-end, smarter, and greener," he said.

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Deputies from all segments of society attend the second plenary meeting of the First Session of the 14th NPC on March 7

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Justin Yifu Lin, a former World Bank chief economist, a professor at Peking University and a member of the 14th CPPCC National Committee, speaks at the second plenary meeting of the First Session of the 14th CPPCC National Committee on March 7

The report also highlighted the role of private businesses in promoting high-quality growth. It said the government will protect the property rights of private enterprises and the rights and interests of entrepreneurs, encourage and support the private sector and private businesses in growing and expanding, and support micro, small, and medium-sized enterprises and self-employed indi-

viduals in business development.

During a joint group meeting with national political advisers from the China National Democratic Construction Association and the All-China Federation of Industry and Commerce on March 6, Xi underlined the need to guarantee a level playing field for private businesses and state-owned enterprises through laws and institutional arrangements, encourage the private sector and its enterprises to grow larger and further lift market expectations and confidence.

More effective measures must be adopted to support the growth of smaller enterprises and self-employed individuals, while platform companies will be encouraged to play a greater role in creating jobs, in boosting consumption and in international competition, he said.

Xi encouraged private businesses to transform their growth patterns, adjust their industrial structure, focus on their main business portfolios and follow a path of high-quality development.

Capable firms should enhance their independent innovation and contribute more to the nation's science and technology self-reliance as well as the commercial application of research outcomes, he said.

To spur private investment, the government should attract the participation of more private investors to the construction of major projects and projects that are part of key industries and supply chains, he said.

Yu called for greater support for private businesses, especially ensuring their access to production inputs at the same prices as state-owned enterprises. According to him, the government and financial institutions should improve support for private enterprises. "Some private firms still face difficulties in financing and land use. As long as their operation costs are cut, improving profits will facilitate their business expansion and therefore expand employment and boost consumption," he said.

According to Yu, China's supply chains have weathered the challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic well, but logistics costs are still high and digital transformation and efficiency should be improved. The government should ramp up support for enterprises to develop offline supply chains as well as digital platforms. He also said the online procurement of materials through digital platforms will drive the upgrading of small and medium-sized enterprises.

The report said China will intensify efforts to attract and utilize foreign investment and continue to open up the modern services sector.

"The opening up of fields including banking, insurance and securities is widening. The government needs to improve the business environment and shorten negative lists defining industries in which foreign companies cannot invest," Yu said.

"Some foreign-funded enterprises are moving out of China, but this is not becoming a trend. China remains attractive to many foreign enterprises and foreign direct investment is improving," he said. **BR**

(*Li Xiaoyang and Miao Ye contributed to this story*)

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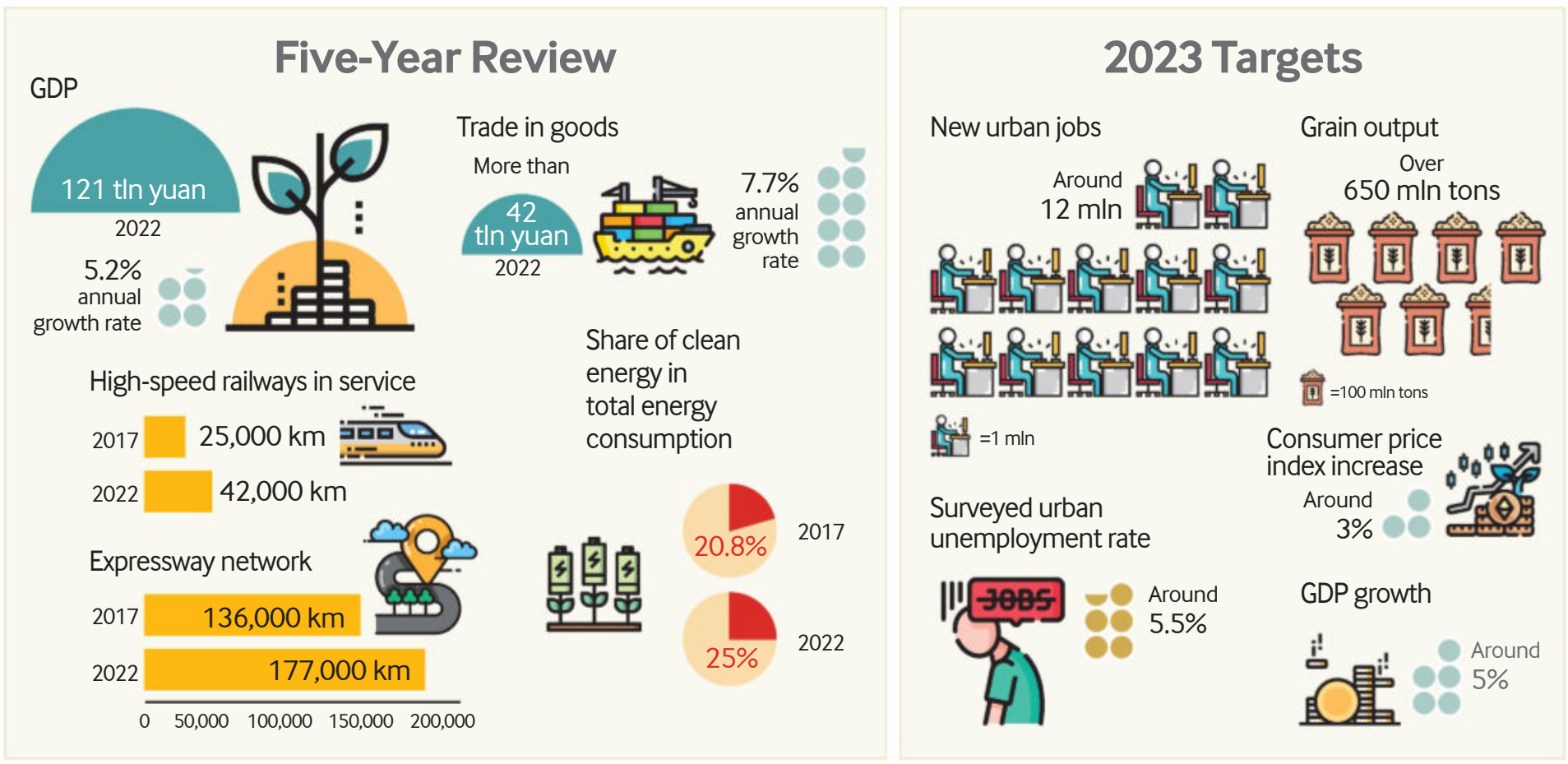

(Source: *2023 Report on the Work of the Government; designed by Pamela Tobey*)

COVER STORY

ECONOMIC GROWTH: QUANTITY VS QUALITY

By Michael Zakkour

The quantity/quality debate is something we, as businesses, product creators and economic stewards, often face. Do we focus on high-quality/low-unit development or sacrifice some quality for the scalability of mass output? Both have their benefits and challenges. But sometimes a situation calls for quality and quantity in equal measure and striking a balance isn't always easy.

At the First Session of the 14th National People's Congress (NPC), the highest state organ of power in China, from March 5 to 13, steadying and growing the economy was perhaps the most important topic of discussion and deliberation.

In short, the message from the country's leadership was that China is planning a course for a GDP growth of approximately 5 percent in 2023. But this must be "quality" growth as well. "While the annual GDP target is an appropriate growth pace required to stabilize expectations and economic expansion, the Chinese economy intends to continue its focus on high-quality development," Liu Shouying, Dean of the School of Economics at Renmin University of China, said, according to Xinhua News Agency.

This approach recognizing the need for a delicate balance of quantity versus quality is a positive sign.

So, where to begin? We can start by using our senses. A walk or drive around Beijing, Shanghai, Chongqing, Wuhan or Chengdu will stir the senses. You can see people out and about at almost pre-pandemic levels.

On the streets of these cities, you can once again hear traffic, the buzz of people talking to each other and shouting into their mobile phones. You can smell the street foods, congee and dumplings of vendors and shops cooking, and you can once again touch and feel products in physical retail environments.

Bringing the five senses back to life is the necessary foundation for growth. This gives me a great deal of optimism that, over the next year, the Chinese economic engine will once again be shifting into high gear.

Now, we move on to the questions of quantity and quality.

Quantity

There are several economic key sectors that require rapid growth in quantity.

The first is employment. The three-year COVID-19 era disrupted the normal patterns, and reliable growth, of employment, a key driver in China's economic growth over the last 25 years. Healthy engagement drives healthy spending on necessities, housing, luxuries, etc.

Over the last three years, as factory activity either slowed or came to a complete halt, many workers returned to their hometowns—and many stayed there.

The reduced foot traffic in or closing of small retail shops, department stores, restaurants and malls also left many frontline workers underemployed or unemployed. The construction and infrastructure sectors witnessed a similar effect. Many tech workers found themselves made redundant in the downturn and China is now producing a record number of college graduates who have entered a challenging private sector employment landscape.

Increasing the quantity of job opportunities available across all sectors of the economy is at the top of the agenda. This is the key to the spending and consumption

that will charge the economy back to life and create a virtuous cycle of employment/spending/employment.

This year, China will "create around 12 million new urban jobs, with a surveyed urban unemployment rate of around 5.5 percent," according to the government work report submitted to the NPC for deliberation on March 5. Other annual objectives include "keeping the consumer price index increase at around 3 percent and grain output above 650 million tons."

Another key area where quantity in growth will be positive is in providing manufacturers and global buyers with incentives to spur the goods export sector. As much as consumption and the digital economy have helped balance the Chinese economy, manufacturing and exports are still critical to growth and employment.

Whatever can be done to get the greatest number of small, medium-sized and mega manufacturers back up to higher or full capacity will generate growth in the coming 12-24 months.

Quality

The digital economy matters to China's near and long-term economic development. It is worth reiterating that here in the context of quality growth.

Said economy is a base for high-paying white-collar jobs across different industries as well as drives innovation.

It is innovation in sectors such as electric vehicles, data science, high-value/hi-tech manufacturing, clean energy, semiconductors and cutting-edge biopharmaceuticals that provides quality growth.

At the NPC session, officials underscored efforts to pursue high-quality development through policy priorities such as accelerating "the modernization of the industrial system and promoting the transition to a green development pattern."

China aims to reduce its energy consumption per unit of GDP by around 2 percent this year and "will strive for better results in actual work."

The NPC session also outlined objectives of continued reductions in the country's discharge of major pollutants, stronger control over the consumption of fossil fuels and steady improvements in the natural environment.

On boosting the country's technology strength, the government work report urged for "pooling quality resources and making concerted efforts to achieve breakthroughs in core technologies in key fields." It also underlined efforts to make traditional industries and small and medium-sized enterprises more advanced, smarter and eco-friendlier.

"We have taken decisive measures to step up macro policy support while refraining from adopting a deluge of strong stimulus policies that would eat into our potential for future growth," the report further read.

High-quality development is deemed "the first and foremost" task in China's modernization endeavor. Instead of taking GDP growth as the sole criterion for success, China now focuses more on improving the quality and efficiency of its growth.

As part of the better quality of development, China has seen increased spending on research and development over the past five years, with reduced energy intensity and carbon emissions, according to the report.

By pursuing the following strategies, China could balance the speed and quality of its economic growth:

- China has made some strides in addressing air pollution and curbing carbon emissions, but more needs to be done: The government could continue to invest in renewable energy and implement policies that encourage companies to reduce their environmental impact;
- China has made significant progress in areas such as artificial intelligence and 5G technology. By investing in research and development, China can continue to drive economic growth while also improving productivity and competitiveness;
- While economic growth has lifted many people out of poverty, it has also widened the rich-poor gap. Quality growth will benefit all levels of Chinese society;
- While China has been dominated by large state-owned enterprises, the government could take steps to encourage entrepreneurship and small business growth, which could in turn promote innovation and competition.

These tactics would also ensure that the country's economic development is sustainable and benefits all segments of society. **BR**

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Robots work at a semiconductor company in Gaoyou, Jiangsu Province, on February 24

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COVER STORY

FOREIGN MINISTER MEETS THE PRESS

On March 7, Chinese Foreign Minister **Qin Gang** answered questions from Chinese and foreign media about China's foreign policy and external relations at a press conference on the sidelines of the First Session of the 14th National People's Congress. Edited excerpts of his remarks follow:

On priorities and highlights in China's diplomacy

We're in the first year of fully implementing the guiding principles set forth by the 20th National Congress of the Communist Party of China (CPC). The congress has outlined top-level plans for China's diplomacy, identified our missions and tasks, and made strategic arrangements to that end. With the COVID-19 situation turning for the better in China, we're steadily resuming exchanges with the world. We've pressed the "acceleration button," and sounded the clarion call for our diplomacy.

We will follow the guidance of head-of-state diplomacy. In particular, we will ensure the success of the two major diplomatic events that we will host—the First China-Central Asia Summit and the Third Belt and Road Forum for International Cooperation.

We will take it as our mission to defend China's core interests. We firmly oppose any form of hegemonism and power politics. We firmly oppose the Cold War mentality, camp-based confrontation and acts to contain and hold back other countries' development. We will resolutely safeguard China's sovereignty, security and development interests.

We will build on our extensive partnerships. We will pursue coordination and sound interactions among major countries, seek friendship and cooperation with other countries, and promote a new type of international relations. China has had a growing network of friends, made more and more new friends, and strengthened ties with old ones.

We will take openness and development as our objective. We will facilitate high-quality development and high-standard opening up. We will reject "decoupling," and oppose severing industrial and supply chains and imposing unilateral sanctions. We will uphold an open and inclusive world economy, and will generate new opportunities for the world with our new development.

We will take multilateralism as the way forward. We will promote the building of a community with a shared future for humanity, promote greater democracy in international relations, and make global governance more just and equitable. We will offer more, better Chinese insights and solutions to help meet humanity's common challenges.

We will take "diplomacy for the people" as our guiding principle. We will always bear in mind the wellbeing and security of our overseas compatriots, and honor our commitment to serving the people. We will enhance the service for and protection of Chinese citizens and institutions abroad to make their overseas travels and exchanges safer and more convenient.

Under the strong leadership of the CPC Central Committee with Comrade Xi Jinping at its core, we will put Xi Jinping Thought on Diplomacy into full practice, follow through on the decisions of the 20th CPC National Congress, and uphold our foreign policy goals of safeguarding world peace and promoting common development. We will meet challenges head-on, boldly take on responsibilities, foster an enabling external environment for building a modern socialist country in all respects, and write a new chapter in China's distinctive major-country diplomacy in the new era.

On the Chinese path to modernization

Chinese modernization offers solutions to many challenges facing human development. It busts the myth that modernization is Westernization; it creates a new form of human advancement; and it provides an important source of inspiration for the world, especially developing countries. As I see it, Chinese modernization has at least five features:

First, independence. The reason why the Chinese path to modernization works is exactly because it is developed in China and rooted in Chinese culture, and fits in well with China's national conditions. China's success in development also proves that every country has the right and ability to choose its

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Chinese Foreign Minister Qin Gang (second left) speaks at a press conference on China's foreign policy and external relations on the sidelines of the First Session of the 14th National People's Congress (NPC) in Beijing on March 7

own path, and to hold its future firmly in its own hands.

Second, putting people first. Chinese modernization is the modernization of common prosperity for all. It is about achieving both material abundance and cultural-ethical enrichment for the people. Modernization should not serve the interests of only a few countries or individuals. It should not make the rich richer and the poor poorer. Nor should it lead to cultural impoverishment, moral degradation or disorder. People around the world should all enjoy the rights to seek development as equals and pursue happiness.

Third, peaceful development. Chinese modernization is not pursued through war, colonization, or plundering. It is dedicated to peace, development, cooperation and mutual benefit, and is committed to harmony between humanity and nature. It is a new path different from Western modernization.

Fourth, openness and inclusiveness. Humanity's modernization should not be a one-flower show but a hundred flowers in bloom. It is important to respect the right of every country to pursue a modernization path tailored to its national reality, and encourage exchange and mutual learning, so that all will flourish and prosper together.

Fifth, working hard in unity. China's success proves that acting in disunity like a heap of loose sand will get us nowhere, and that only by striving in unity can we pool strength. We will persevere in carrying out the set blueprint until it becomes reality. Partisan rift, empty talk and frequent policy flip-flop as seen in certain country will only make even the best blueprint an illusion and a castle in the air.

The process of Chinese modernization is a boost to the force for peace, justice and progress in the world. We hope and believe that as more and more countries embark on their own journey of modernization, the vision of building a community with a shared future for humanity will become true.

On China's role in global governance

Keeping in mind the lessons of history as well as the wellbeing of the world and all of humanity, President Xi Jinping has proposed the right approach to global governance. Throughout the past 10 years in the new era, President Xi has put forward a host of major initiatives and proposals, including building a community with a shared future for humanity, the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), the common values of humanity, the Global Development Initiative and the Global Security Initiative. The core message of these initiatives is that countries are interdependent,▶▶

humanity has a shared future, and the international community must get united for cooperation. With solidarity and cooperation, we can defeat COVID-19, address climate change, tackle the deficits in peace, security, development and governance, and build an open, inclusive, clean and beautiful world of lasting peace, universal security and common prosperity.

Global governance should be promoted in accordance with the law and the principles of international law enshrined in the UN Charter; equity and justice must be upheld while hegemonism and selfish interests must be rejected; solidarity must be defended while division and confrontation must be abandoned. Developing countries account for more than 80 percent of the global population and more than 70 percent of global economic growth. People in developing countries are entitled to a better life, and developing countries are entitled to greater representation and a louder voice in international affairs.

A just cause should be pursued for the common good. China will keep in mind the interests of the world, take an active part in global governance, and contribute more to world peace and development and to human progress.

On the Belt and Road Initiative

The BRI is a high-quality public good initiated by China, built by the parties involved, and shared by the world. The BRI delivers high-standard, sustainable and livelihood-enhancing outcomes, and is hence widely welcomed. To date, over three quarters of countries around the world and 32 international organizations have joined this initiative.

Ten years after its inception, the BRI has evolved from vision into reality, boosting development in partner countries and bringing real benefits to the people. A decade of efforts have laid down a pathway toward common development, and created an array of national landmarks, livelihood projects, and milestones of cooperation. Over the past decade, the BRI has galvanized nearly $1 trillion of investment, established more than 3,000 cooperation projects, created 420,000 local jobs, and helped lift almost 40 million people out of poverty. China will host the Third Belt and Road Forum for International Cooperation this year. Taking this as an opportunity, we will work with all relevant parties for more fruitful outcomes from Belt and Road cooperation.

The BRI is a practical and open initiative guided by the principle of extensive consultation, joint contribution and shared benefits. Its cooperation is conducted through consultation, and its partnerships are built with friendship and good faith. We welcome all initiatives that are not ideologically driven proposed by other countries, and we are happy to see them succeed if they don't carry a geopolitical agenda.

China should be the last one to be accused of creating so-called "debt traps." Data show that multilateral financial institutions and commercial creditors account for over 80 percent of the sovereign debt of developing countries. They are the biggest source of debt burdens on developing countries. Particularly since last year, the unprecedented, rapid interest hikes by the United States have led to capital outflows in many countries and worsened the debt problems in the countries concerned.

China has been making efforts to help the countries in distress, and is the biggest contributor to the Group of 20's Debt Service Suspension Initiative. China will continue to participate constructively in the resolution of international debt issues. Meanwhile, we call on other parties to act together and share the burden fairly. When parties sit together and talk things through, the solutions will outweigh the problems.

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Chinese Foreign Minister Qin Gang attends a press conference on China's foreign policy and external relations on the sidelines of the First Session of the 14th NPC in Beijing on March 7

On China-Russia relations

China and Russia have found a path of major-country relations featuring strategic trust and good neighborliness, setting a good example for a new type of international relations.

Some countries that are inclined to view China-Russia relations through the lens of Cold War alliances see nothing but their own image. The China-Russia relationship is based on no-alliance and no-confrontation, and it is not targeted at any third party. It is not a threat to any country, nor is it subject to any interference or discord sown by any third party. With China and Russia working together, the world will have a driving force toward multipolarity and greater democracy in international relations, and global strategic balance and stability will be better ensured. The more unstable the world becomes, the more imperative it is for China and Russia

to steadily advance their relations.

Head-of-state interaction is the compass and anchor of China-Russia relations. Under the strategic guidance of the two presidents, the China-Russia comprehensive strategic partnership of coordination for the new era will surely go from strength to strength.

On China-U.S. relations

A recent episode in China-U.S. relations is the unmanned airship incident. It is entirely an accident caused by force majeure, and its facts and nature are crystal clear. Even the U.S. did not believe it posed a physical threat. However, in violation of the spirit of international law and international customary practices, the U.S. acted with a presumption of guilt. It overreacted, abused force, and dramatized the accident, creating a diplomatic crisis that could have been avoided.

An accident can reveal something fundamental. In this case, the U.S. perception and views of China are seriously distorted. It regards China as its primary rival and biggest geopolitical challenge. This is like the first button on a shirt being put wrong. And the result is that the U.S.' China policy has entirely deviated from the rational and sound track.

The U.S. claims it seeks to "outcompete" China but does not seek conflict. Yet in reality, its so-called "competition" means to contain and suppress China in all respects and get the two countries locked in a zero-sum game. The U.S. talks a lot about following rules. But imagine two athletes competing in an Olympic race. If one athlete, instead of focusing on giving it one's best, always tries to trip or even injure the other, that is not fair competition, but malicious confrontation and a foul.

Its so-called "establishing guardrails" for China-U.S. relations and "not seeking conflict" actually means that China should not respond in words or action when slandered or attacked. That is just impossible! If the U.S. does not hit the brakes but continues to speed down the wrong path, no amount of guardrails can prevent derailing, and conflict and confrontation will surely follow. Who will bear the catastrophic consequences? Such competition is a reckless gamble with the stakes being the fundamental interests of the two peoples and even the future of humanity.

Naturally, China is firmly opposed to all this. If the U.S. has the ambition to make itself great again, it should also have a broad mind for the development of other countries. Containment and suppression will not make America great, and it will not stop the rejuvenation of China.

As President Xi pointed out, whether China and the U.S. can handle their relationship well bears on the future of the world. Getting the relationship right is not optional, but something we must do and must do well. I have also noted that more and more people with vision and insight in the U.S. are deeply worried about the current state of China-U.S. relations, and have been calling for a rational and pragmatic policy toward China.

The American people, just like the Chinese people, are friendly, kind and sincere, and want a better life and a better world. When I was working in the U.S., I visited many places. In Los Angeles, workers at the port of Long Beach shared with me how their entire families live off trade with China, stressing that the U.S. and China should prosper together. Farmers in Iowa told me that they want to produce more food because a great number of people in the world are still living in hunger. Presidents of universities stressed that international exchange is critical for technological advancement, and that technological decoupling is a lose-lose and all-lose. A kid at the Yinghua Academy in Minnesota, the world champion of the *Chinese Bridge* Chinese show for foreign elementary school students, confided to me in fluent Chinese that she is learning the language because she loves China. Every time I think about them, I'm convinced the China-U.S. relationship should be determined by the common interests and shared responsibilities of the two countries and by the friendship between the Chinese and American peoples, rather than by U.S. domestic politics or hysterical neo-McCarthyism.

China will continue to follow the principles put forth by President Xi, namely, mutual respect, peaceful coexistence and win-win cooperation, to pursue a sound and stable relationship with the U.S. We hope the U.S. Government will listen to the calls of the two peoples, rid itself of the strategic anxiety of "threat inflation," abandon the zero-sum Cold War mentality, and refuse to be hijacked by "political correctness." We hope the U.S. will honor its commitments and work with China to explore the right way to get along with each other to benefit both countries and the entire world.

On China-Japan relations

China and Japan are close neighbors. To foster a China-Japan relationship for the new era, it is important to do the following:

First, honor commitments. Our two countries signed the Treaty of Peace and Friendship 45 years ago, codifying the principles and direction for the development of China-Japan relations for the first time. This treaty, together with the other three political documents between China and Japan, form the political foundation of the bilateral relations. These documents, particularly the important political consensus that the two countries should "be partners, not threats," must be truly observed. Words must be matched with actions.

Second, learn lessons from history. The immense sufferings imposed by the Japanese militarists on the Chinese nation are still painful today. The Chinese people will not forget this, and the Japanese side must not forget. Forgetting history is a betrayal, and denying a crime is to repeat a crime. China always treats Japan with goodwill and hopes for friendship and good-neighborliness. Yet, should some people from the Japanese▶▶

side choose a beggar-thy-neighbor approach rather than pursuing partnership, and even take part in a new cold war to contain China, the bilateral relations would only suffer new wounds when the old ones are yet to be healed.

Third, preserve the international order. Some leaders in Japan recently have also been talking a lot about "international order." We need to make clear what order they are talking about. Today's international order is built on the victory of the World Anti-Fascist War, which cost the lives and blood of 35 million Chinese soldiers and civilians. The Chinese people will never accept any form of historical revisionism that challenges the post-war international order and international justice. The Treaty of Peace and Friendship explicitly opposed hegemonism, and its spirit remains relevant today.

Fourth, promote win-win cooperation. China and Japan are highly complementary and need each other. We should uphold market principles and a free and open spirit, increase cooperation, jointly ensure stable and smooth industrial and supply chains, and inject impetus and vitality into global economic recovery.

One more issue I wish to raise here. The Japanese Government has decided to discharge contaminated water of the Fukushima nuclear power plant into the sea. This is not Japan's private business, but a major issue vital to the marine environment and human health. We urge the Japanese side to properly handle this matter in a responsible manner.

On China-EU relations

China and Europe are two great civilizations, two big markets and two major forces. Our interactions are an independent choice made by the two sides entirely based on our respective strategic interests. The China-Europe relationship is not targeted at any third party, nor is it subjugated to or controlled by any third party.

No matter how the situation may evolve, China all along sees the EU as a comprehensive strategic partner and supports European integration. We hope that Europe, with the painful Ukraine crisis in mind, will truly realize strategic autonomy and long-term peace and stability.

We will work with Europe to uphold true multilateralism, and keep to mutual respect and win-win cooperation. We wish to work with Europe to overcome disruptions and challenges, keep deepening the China-EU comprehensive strategic partnership, and bring more stability, certainty and positive energy to a world of change and disorder.

On China's Middle East policy

There are longstanding relations between China and Middle Eastern countries. We are good friends and good partners.

At the first China-Arab States Summit late last year, the two sides agreed to build a Sino-Arab community with a shared future in the new era. This is a strong boost to our friendship and cooperation. Last month, Iranian President Ebrahim Raisi paid a successful visit to China. During the visit, the two sides agreed to deepen the China-Iran comprehensive strategic partnership and take the bilateral relations to new levels.

China supports the strategic autonomy of Middle Eastern countries, and opposes foreign interference in their internal affairs. China will continue to stand for justice and support countries in this region in seeking political settlement of hotspot issues through dialogue and consultation. China fully respects Middle Eastern countries as the masters of their own affairs.

We have no intention to fill a so-called "vacuum." And we will not build exclusive circles. In the Middle East, China will be a facilitator for peace and stability, a cooperative partner for development and prosperity, and an enabler for building strength through unity.

On the Taiwan question

Let me first quote two lines from the Preamble of the Constitution of the People's Republic of China—"Taiwan is part of the sacred territory of the

People's Republic of China. It is the inviolable duty of all Chinese people, including our compatriots in Taiwan, to accomplish the great task of reunifying the motherland." Resolving the Taiwan question is a matter for the Chinese people, and no other country has the right to interfere in it. Some senior U.S. officials have recently asserted that the Taiwan question is not an internal affair of China. We firmly oppose such absurd comments, and we will stay on high alert.

The two sides of the Taiwan Straits belong to one common family, which is called China. As brothers and sisters, we will continue to work with the greatest sincerity and utmost efforts to pursue peaceful reunification. Meanwhile, we reserve the option of taking all necessary measures. In fact, China's Anti-Secession Law has explicitly made this point. In case this law is violated, we must act in accordance with the Constitution and the law. No one should ever underestimate the firm

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Journalists bid for the opportunity to raise questions to Chinese Foreign Minister Qin Gang at a press conference on the sidelines of the First Session of the 14th NPC in Beijing on March 7

resolve, strong will or great capability of the Chinese Government and people to safeguard national sovereignty and territorial integrity.

The Taiwan question is the core of China's core interests, the bedrock of the political foundation of China-U.S. relations, and the first redline that must not be crossed in China-U.S. relations. The U.S. bears unshirkable responsibility for causing the Taiwan question. The reason why China raises this question to the U.S. is to urge it to stop interfering in China's internal affairs. The Chinese people have every right to ask: Why does the U.S. talk at length about respecting sovereignty and territorial integrity on Ukraine, while disrespecting China's sovereignty and territorial integrity on China's Taiwan question? Why does the U.S. ask China not to provide weapons to Russia, while it keeps selling arms to Taiwan in violation of the August 17 Communiqué issued in 1982? Why does the U.S. keep on professing the maintenance of regional peace and stability, while covertly formulating a "plan for the destruction of Taiwan?"

Separatism for "Taiwan independence" is as incompatible with peace and stability of the Taiwan Straits as fire is with water. For peace and stability in the Taiwan Straits, its real threat is the separatist forces for "Taiwan independence;" its solid anchor is the one-China principle, and its genuine guardrails are the three China-U.S. joint communiqués. Mishandling of the Taiwan question will shake the very foundation of China-U.S. relations. If the U.S. truly expects a peaceful Taiwan Straits, it should stop containing China by exploiting the Taiwan question, return to the fundamental of the one-China principle, honor its political commitment to China, and unequivocally oppose and forestall Taiwan independence.

On the Russia-Ukraine conflict

The Ukraine crisis is a tragedy that could have been avoided. But it has come to where it stands today. There are painful lessons that all parties should truly reflect upon.

The Ukraine crisis has a complex history and reasons. In essence, it is an eruption of the problems built up in the security governance of Europe. China always makes its own judgment independently based on the merits of the issue. Between peace and war, we choose peace. Between dialogue and sanctions, we choose dialogue. Between lowering the temperature and fanning the flames, we choose the former. China did not create the crisis. It is not a party to the crisis, and has not provided weapons to either side of the conflict. Why on earth the blame, sanctions and threats against China? This is absolutely unacceptable.

Less than two weeks ago, we issued China's Position on the Political Settlement of the Ukraine Crisis. It offers 12 propositions, including respecting the sovereignty of all countries, abandoning the Cold War mentality, ceasing hostilities, and resuming peace talks. The core stance is to promote talks for peace.

Regrettably, however, efforts for peace talks have been repeatedly undermined. There seems to be "an invisible hand" pushing for the protraction and escalation of the conflict and using the Ukraine crisis to serve a certain geopolitical agenda.

The Ukraine crisis has come to a critical juncture. Either hostilities stop and peace is restored and the process of political settlement begins, or more fuel is added to the flames and the crisis further expands and spirals out of control. Conflict, sanctions and pressure will not solve the problem. What is needed is calmness, reason and dialogue. The process of peace talks should begin as soon as possible, and the legitimate security concerns of all parties should be respected. This is the right way to achieve durable security in Europe. **BR**

Modernization Drive

By Stephan Ossenkopp

It is undeniable that China has experienced an unprecedented modernization boom since the implementation of its reform and opening-up policy in 1978. By connecting with the world through trade, China has gained the economic power to transform its own internal regions and rural areas. Peaceful integration into the world economy as a producer, consumer, builder and, more recently, a technological innovator, has allowed China to achieve remarkable economic growth rates and aggregate national power.

This enabled China to declare its elimination of absolute poverty in February 2021. The construction of over 1 million km of rural roads and the provision of fast Internet to over 95 percent of Chinese villages were instrumental in achieving this feat. The World Bank in 2022 stated that over four decades, China's poverty eradication efforts had contributed more than 75 percent of global poverty reduction in the same period. In 2017, United Nations General Secretary António Guterres highlighted China's targeted poverty reduction method as the only way toward success, offering a valuable lesson for all developing countries.

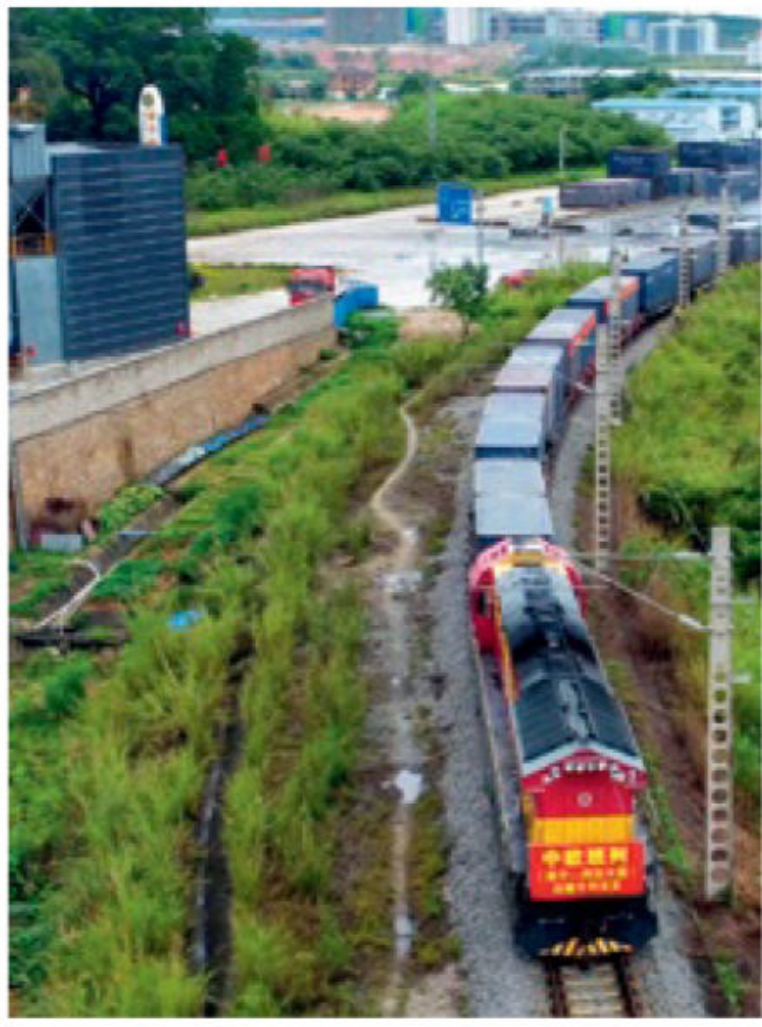
Infrastructure giant

In just a few decades, China has transformed its national infrastructure into one of the most advanced in the world. The total length of roads, including expressways, in China has surged from 3.6 million km in 2007 to 5.2 million in 2020, with an additional 110,000 km of high-quality expressway. The 13th Five-Year Plan (2016-20), issued by the National Development and Reform Commission (NDRC) and ratified by the National People's Congress, the highest state organ of power in China, in 2016, committed the Chinese leadership to building a transport system connecting national and international routes, covering metropolitan as well as rural areas. Since then, China has not only upgraded its basic economic infrastructure but also added unique megaprojects that make it stand out globally, such as the Hong Kong-Zhuhai-Macao Bridge, Beijing Daxing International Airport, and the Yangshan Deepwater Port off the coast of Shanghai, which operates the world's largest fleet of automated guided vehicles.

China's high-speed rail sector has crossed the 40,000-km threshold, reaching a global market share of more than 65 percent, far surpassing Japan, France and Germany. A recent experiment in Henan Province had two new CR450 high-speed trains safely pass each other at 435 km per hour. By comparison, the United States, which has declared a "systemic rivalry" against China, only runs a single high-speed train connection: the 735-km Boston-New York-Washington Northeast Corridor, at a maximum speed of 322 km per hour.

Global connectivity

However, China's national economic build-up is neither in opposition to any other country or self-declared "rival," nor is it a policy of isolationism as some Western commentators have put it. On the contrary, China wants to build a comprehensive and multidimensional transport network for efficient connectivity with the rest of the world.



The China Academy of Transportation Sciences presented a plan to the international community in October 2021, proposing the National 1-2-3 Travel Circle, which will make it possible to commute anywhere within a single city within one hour, between cities in city clusters within two hours and between major cities within three hours. The Global 1-2-3 Logistics Circle will enable the delivery of express packages inside China within one day, to neighboring countries within two days, and to major cities worldwide within three days. The academy's plan envisions that by 2035, China's transportation network will reach 700,000 km, with 27 major coastal ports and 400 civil commercial airports. This would make China a world leader in terms of infrastructure size and quality, serving as a central global hub for transport technology, trade, industry, tourism, culture, and civilizational exchange. Partners in this

A China-Europe freight train carrying sugar bound for Kazakhstan leaves Nanning International Railway Port in Guangxi Zhuang Autonomous Region on May 15, 2022

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plan are not only developed countries but also many developing countries.

On October 14, 2021, Chinese President Xi Jinping delivered a speech at the Second United Nations Global Sustainable Transport Conference in Beijing. He emphasized the crucial role of transport in the economy, acting as a common bond between civilizations and transforming the world into a closely connected global village through transport networks. Xi reaffirmed China's commitment to an open and inclusive system of global connectivity across land, sea, air and the Internet. He also announced the establishment of a global innovation and knowledge center for sustainable transport to share China's experiences and technologies with other countries.

Breakthroughs in space

April 24 is China's Space Day, as the nation's first satellite, *Dongfanghong-1*, was launched on that day in 1970. At that time, the United States and the Soviet Union were already far ahead. It wasn't until 1992 that China defined manned spaceflight as a medium-to-long-term goal, but since then it has achieved amazing progress and even historic breakthroughs. In 2005, the *Shenzhou-5* spacecraft launched the first Chinese astronaut into Earth's orbit. The landing of the *Chang'e-4* lunar probe with its accompanying *Yutu-2* rover on the far side of the moon in 2019 was one such historic precedent. It even had plant seeds, yeast and fruit fly eggs on board as biological experiments. The *Chang'e-4* mission was already an example of international cooperation, as Russia, Sweden, Germany, Saudi Arabia and the Netherlands were all involved in the project.

In June 2021, President Xi visited the Space Control Center in Beijing to communicate with the crew aboard the core module of China's *Tiangong* space station, which had been placed in orbit 390 km above the Earth's surface. By the end of 2022, two large space laboratories were docked to the core module to form what is currently the most advanced research facility in space. Hundreds of international research projects in fields such as astronomy, biotechnology and material testing will be carried out in the coming years.

To this end, China has begun extensive cooperation with the United Nations Office for Outer Space Affairs to coordinate international undertakings for scientific experiments, as well as cooperation in space science and technology application. It has also signed cooperation agreements with 19 countries and regions, as well as with several multilateral institutions such as the Shanghai Cooperation Organization, the BRICS group (Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa), and the Asian Pacific Space Cooperation Organization.

Peaceful dialogue

These are just a few examples of how China's modernization has contributed both to the country's national strength and to fostering a better global community for common development. China is also restoring its cultural relics, compiling traditional texts and artworks to reaffirm its 5,000-year-old traditions and roots. Rediscovering and popularizing its own civilizational origins give China a clear self-understanding to communicate and exchange with other cultures and civilizations on an equal footing and with mutual respect. For example, in May 2018, the International Alliance of Museums of the Silk Road was established as a platform for exchanges in countries along the ancient Silk Road to create a bond of friendship and promote cross-cultural exchange. Another mechanism to promote mutual learning and instill a strong sense of harmonious coexistence among cultures is the Conference on Dialogue of Asian Civilizations, which was attended by 1,300 representatives from 47 countries in May 2019.

China's strategy of reform and opening up has always been consistent. The modernization of China's economy, whether in infrastructure, technology or culture, has always gone hand in hand with international cooperation and peaceful integration for the benefit of both China and the international community. Any claim to the contrary lacks evidence. China is fully aware that only through a continuous process of dialogue, integration and cooperation can it achieve its own goals of becoming a fully developed, modern, strong and beautiful nation. **BR**

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How Whole-Process People's Democracy Works

By Evandro Menezes de Carvalho

The world features different types of democracy, with the concept rooted in the history, tradition and culture of each country. But how can we evaluate whether a country's political system is, in fact, democratic?

Democracy must give people the opportunity to participate in the process of their country's development. It must be effective and change people's lives for the better. Also, the people should be the judges of their own political systems.

Whole-process people's democracy is a socialist form of democracy developed by and in China. It is a holistic and systemic concept. It is not only a procedural concept but also a substantive one. It is not only about the right to vote, but also about the right to participate.

The annual Two Sessions are the most important political gatherings in China. The term "Two Sessions" refers to the annual meetings of the National People's Congress (NPC), China's top legislature, and the National Committee of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference (CPPCC), the country's top political advisory body. Both bodies have distinct but fundamental roles in China's political life. Usually set in March, the sessions gather NPC deputies and CPPCC National Committee members from across the country to discuss and approve national priorities.

People's congresses and CPPCC committees are also indispensable in local-level governance. Every year, deputies to the congresses and members of the committees from all segments of society will gather to discuss issues that matter to local lives.

The core of China's political system is the leadership of the Communist Party of China (CPC).

When evaluating this political system, we must assess it based on how it works. China eradicated absolute poverty nationwide in 2020, a major achievement. I believe the Chinese people consider their political system to be very effective as it brings them tangible benefits.

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Sheng Hong (center left), a deputy to the National People's Congress (NPC), seeks residents' feedback on an amendment to the Charity Law at a Shanghai community on February 7. The NPC is China's top legislature

China also has eight non-communist parties. The CPC, the governing party, consults with the other parties and prominent individuals without any political party affiliation on major national and local policies and matters. This is interesting because Western political systems generally feature partisan divisions—which sometimes go against the interests of the nation by large.

In Western democracies, people have the right to vote and to choose their leaders. But after they've cast their ballot, participation ends. And so, many politicians promise to deliver grand solutions throughout the electoral process but once elected, the people don't have the opportunity to know what they are factually doing for them. And this is exactly why Western-style democracy is facing a legitimacy crisis. This is also exactly why I think Western democracies are becoming more and more dysfunctional with an increasingly divided society as well as an increasing inequality within society. What is the value of a democratic system if it doesn't help people lead better lives?

Through its whole-process people's democracy, China is doing something different—and it's been working for people all over the country. This is something Western countries must understand.

I learned more about China and its unique governance philosophy by reading *Xi Jinping: The Governance of China*. The fourth volume in the series contains a line that I think sums up the idea of democracy. It reads, "Democracy is not an ornament to be put on display, but an instrument for addressing the issues that concern the people." I think this is the core of the country's democracy. **BR**

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Clearing the Air

By Lan Xinzhen

According to a report on the national air quality by the Ministry of Ecology and Environment, from January to December 2022, cities at and above the prefecture level saw 86.5 percent of days with air quality at moderate or good levels. The former level refers to an air quality index between 51 and 100 and therefore acceptable air quality; the latter to an index of 50 or below, with air pollution posing little or no risk. In 2012, that percentage stood at just 40.9.

As air quality improves, a host of new expressions have become all the rage—such as "low carbon," "reducing your transportation footprint," and "green is gold." People are also getting into the habit of, for example, turning off the lights when not using them or setting their air conditioning to no lower than 26 degrees Celsius—both resulting in lower electricity consumption. All in all, the concept of green development is gradually taking root.

China has achieved great economic results since the late 1970s, but the high-polluting and energy-intensive ways of economic growth also plunged the country into environmental disarray, even triggering public backlash. It was against this backdrop that the idea of green development budded, essentially marking China's need for an ecological revolution.

The concept can be understood in two ways. The first is about ecological protection and management. The Chinese Government has ordered the shutdown of high-polluting and energy-intensive companies or demanded they upgrade their technologies to official emission standards, reinforced by the

announcement of ecological protection laws.

Similar undertakings over the past decade have already borne fruit, as exemplified by the decrease of smoggy days and continuously improving air quality.

The second is about economic development. China must go down the path of energy saving and environmental protection in its efforts to further develop its economy. By no means should the country sacrifice its ecological environment for temporary economic growth.

The Communist Party of China has, on multiple occasions, publicly declared it intends to meet the people's aspirations for a better life. From the public's perspective, having a sound ecological environment is a vital component of a good life. Under the guidance of the green development concept, a nationwide industrial structure based on saving natural resources and protecting the environment has gradually been taking shape in recent years. The targets of peaking carbon emissions and realizing carbon neutrality before 2030 and 2060, respectively, as well as the formation of a green building system, made up of six components—land efficiency, energy efficiency, water efficiency, resource efficiency, environment quality and operational management, meanwhile, have helped further implement the concept. Today, the people's benefits are already tangible: cleaner air and drinking water, increased food safety, as well as a more comfortable and beautiful environment to live in.

The government work report was released at the First Session of the 14th National People's Congress, the highest state organ of power in China, on March 5, saying that in the past five years, China had established multiple green sectors and a circular economy, and encouraged the research on and development plus application of energy-saving and environmental protection technologies and products. According to the report, financial support for green development had been scaled up and many improvements had been realized to evaluate and, when necessary, adjust energy consumption targets.

On the global stage, then, China has played an active part in cooperation on addressing climate change, contributing its part to global climate governance.

Positive changes in China's ecological environment over the past few years have invalidated some arguments regarding the country's related policies, including "environmental protection will hinder economic growth" and, especially, "it'll be all talk but no action when it comes to environmental protection."

But perhaps we should clear the air here: The reality is that the Chinese Government intends to not only meet the people's demand for a better life in terms of material possessions but also their requirements for a cleaner environment. **BR**

The reality is that the Chinese Government intends to not only meet the people's demand for a better life in terms of material possessions but also their requirements for a cleaner environment

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Is the Legal System Powerless Against Online Harassment?

By Luo Xiang

In July 2022, then 23-year-old Zheng Linghua from Hangzhou in Zhejiang Province suffered tremendous online backlash after a photo she posted on popular lifestyle app Xiaohongshu (Little Red Book) of her showing her hospitalized grandfather a graduate school admission letter whilst sporting pink-dyed hair went viral. Some netizens appeared to take offense at her colored hair, flooding Zheng's account with taunts like "pink haired prostitute" or even suggesting the photo with her beloved grandfather was "the image of a May-December couple."

The cyberbullying led to the young student battling severe depression for six months and eventually taking her own life on January 23.

Zheng tried to defend her rights by recording evidence of the abusive comments and trying to pursue legal action. Her lawyer called for an end to the harassment and for the removal of the abusive content. But the platform failed to do anything about the matter.

The news of her death was met with outrage on Weibo, the Chinese Twitter equivalent, with many commenters wondering: "Is our legal system really powerless against cyberviolence?"

Of course it's not. The Civil Code, the Law on Penalties for Administration of Public Security and the Criminal Law all feature corresponding articles to deal with this type of situation.

First is civil liability; the term "liability" means responsibility for the harm alleged by the plaintiff and the damages suffered. Article 1024 of the Civil Code provides that: "A party to civil legal relations enjoys the right to reputation. No organization or individual may infringe upon other's right to reputation by insultation, defamation, or the like." So, at the occurrence of any such

infringement, the party responsible shall bear civil liability such as financial compensation or the extension of apologies.

Next is administrative liability. Article 42 of the Law on Penalties for Administration of Public Security stipulates: "A person who openly humiliates another person or slanders another person by fabricating stories may be detained for a maximum of 10 days."

Finally, there is criminal liability. Article 246 of the Criminal Law states: "Whoever, by violence or other methods, publicly humiliates another person or invents stories to defame them, if the circumstances are serious, shall be sentenced to fixed-term imprisonment of no more than three years, criminal detention, public surveillance or deprivation of political rights."

The right to reputation is based on mutual respect, which means that every individual is entitled to respect regardless of social status. However, the dark side of human nature is that we often try to gain the moral upper hand by pointing out the flaws in and mistakes of others, even if we, too, share similar shortcomings or have made similar mistakes. But as is so very often the case, those who like to criticize others' lifestyles may in fact have bigger problems of their own.

The Internet provides an easily accessible and anonymous medium for group polarization, opening up avenues for echo chambers and the reinforcement of fallible information. Extensive research on group polarization has found that the group's consensual opinion often is more extreme than that of its individual members. This is why it is a fundamental reason for cyberviolence running rife. Extreme opinions easily provoke extreme emotions and people just jump on the bandwagon.

But contrary to popular belief, the Internet is not a ring of invisibility and users' real identities can be traced. Measures to hold abusers accountable are manifold and effective.

The Silence, a short story by Japanese writer Haruki Murakami, tells the tale of a high school student who is isolated from a group of his peers. At the very end, the protagonist says, "What I really fear are those who accept and believe uncritically what others say. They don't even think—even for a moment—about whether what they are doing is wrong, they don't even think they can hurt someone fatally; it is these people that I am really afraid of."

Treat people with dignity and respect; and you shall receive both in return. While Zheng fought alone and you and I stood idly by, we, too, became accomplices in her untimely demise. **BR**

The author is a professor of law at the China University of Political Science and Law
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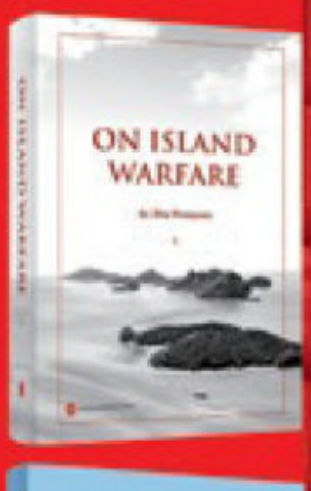

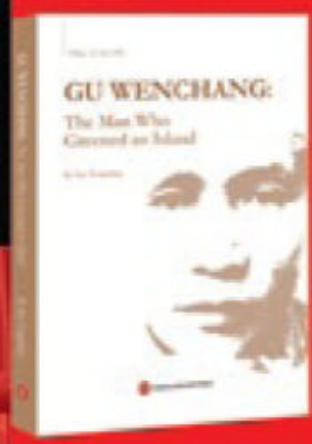

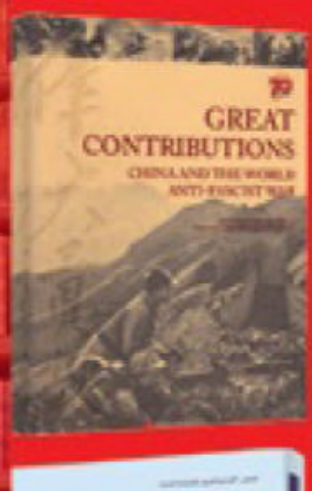

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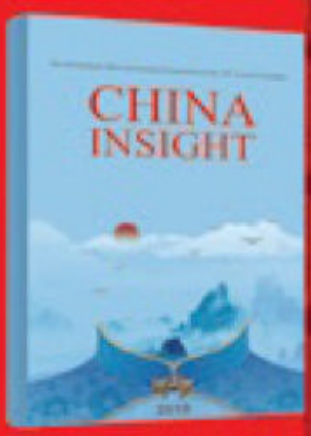

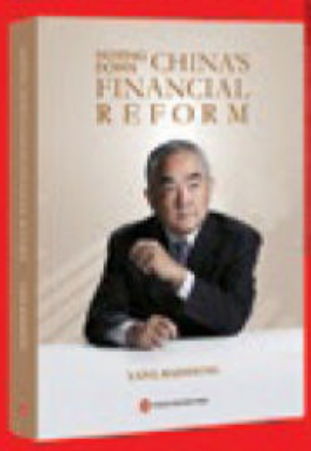

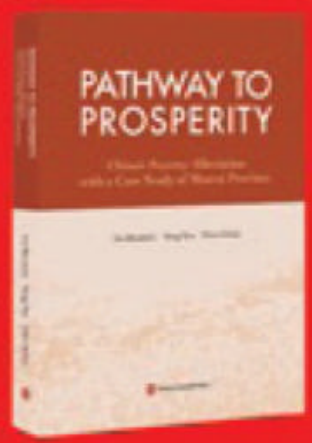

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Toward a Common Goal

How non-communist parties contribute to the country's development

By Lu Yan

It might be challenging for many people to name China's non-communist political parties and understand the differences between them. On March 5, the heads of the central committees of these parties attended a press conference on the sidelines of the First Session of the 14th National Committee of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference (CPPCC), the country's top political advisory body. The press conference was an opportunity to introduce how these organizations participate in China's system of multiparty cooperation and political consultation under the leadership of the Communist Party of China (CPC).

While speaking at the press conference inside the Great Hall of the People in Beijing, Cai Dafeng, Chairperson of the Central Committee of the China Association for Promoting Democracy (CAPD), pledged to raise the party's capacity to deliberate and offer suggestions on state affairs.

Founded in Shanghai in 1945, the CAPD is mainly composed of middle and high-ranking intellectuals engaged in educational and cultural work. Cai spent many years after his graduation in 1985 working in prestigious universities like Tongji and Fudan, before being elected as the party's central committee chairperson in 2017 and reelected in 2022.

At the press conference, Cai called on CAPD members to make studying major policies and principles their primary task in performing duties, improve their methods of investigation and research, further standardize and institutionalize their activities in conducting their work, and apply more information technology in their undertakings.

Apart from the CAPD, other non-communist political parties are the Revolutionary Committee of the Chinese Kuomintang, China Democratic League, China National Democratic Construction Association, Chinese Peasants and Workers Democratic Party, China Zhi Gong Party, the Jiu San Society and Taiwan Democratic Self-Government League. Each with unique features and member compositions, they have been exerting efforts together with the CPC to make the country better.

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Heads of the central committees of the non-communist political parties and the All-China Federation of Industry and Commerce attend a press conference on the sidelines of the First Session of the 14th National Committee of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference at the Great Hall of the People in Beijing on March 5

Advisers, helpers and colleagues

For decades, the eight non-communist political parties have played an indispensable role in the country's overall development with their suggestions and supervision.

The China Zhi Gong Party, founded in 1925, is mainly composed of returned overseas Chinese and their relatives, and representatives of people with overseas connections. Jiang Pengju, a member of the party, also Vice Mayor of Changzhou, Jiangsu Province, made suggestions during this year's CPPCC National Committee session about improving China's ability to develop chips for new-energy vehicles (NEVs). "China's NEVs are becoming increasingly competitive on the global market, but our automotive chips are heavily dependent on imports," Jiang told *Beijing Review*, adding that the country should give more support to companies with advanced technologies. He also supports the establishment of a national vehicle chip innovation center as well as a number of new chip-developing companies.

The Chinese Peasants and Workers Democratic Party (CPWDP), founded in August 1930 and with many members working in the fields of medicine and health, has leveraged its advantages in the medical field and provided suggestions and reference documents to inform CPC and government decision-making on COVID-19 prevention and control. Additionally, its more than 60,000 members had made donations related to pandemic prevention and control worth more than 1.2 billion yuan ($172 million) by the end of last year, according to He Wei, Chairperson of the CPWDP Central Committee.

Founded in 1946, the Jiu San Society is composed mainly of over 200,000 intellectuals engaged in science, technology, culture, education, and medical and health work. Among them, 66 are academicians of the Chinese Academy of Sciences (CAS) and the Chinese Academy of Engineering. Its chairperson Wu Weihua is a botanist and CAS member. He said the party has carried out in-depth research and studies and put forward proposals on China's innovation-driven development and the enhancement of scientific and technological strength.

The Revolutionary Committee of the Chinese Kuomintang (RCCK) conducted research and on-site investigations on the ecological and environmental protection of the Yangtze River, the longest river in both China and Asia and the third longest river in the world. After the Yangtze River Protection Law took effect in March 2021, members of the party have worked with environmental protection officials and company representatives in several cities along the river to monitor their implementation of the law, assist in resolving problems and offer advice. This is part of a five-year national campaign starting in 2021, as part of which each non-communist party pairs with one or two regions to supervise local government work in environmental protection and help them solve the problems they encounter. Hubei Province, located at the middle reaches of the Yangtze, is subject to the RCCK's supervision.

The system at work

Unlike some Western countries, China has no opposition parties. But the country's political party system is not a system of one-party rule, nor is it one in which multiple parties vie for power and govern in turn. It is a multiparty cooperation system in which the CPC is the governing party, and the other parties accept its leadership. The other parties cooperate with the CPC and function as its advisors and assistants. Through various forms of consultation, like holding forums and soliciting suggestions, the CPC consults with the other parties, as well as prominent individuals without any political party affiliation (non-affiliates), on major national and local policies and matters.

Members of the other parties and the non-affiliates can also be deputies to the National People's Congress, the top legislature, and the National Committee of the CPPCC; some of them hold leading posts in state organs. "The system of multiparty cooperation and political consultation under the leadership of the CPC will continue and develop long into the future," China's Constitution stipulates.

According to a white paper titled China: Democracy That Works, released by the State Council Information Office in 2021, the system of multiparty cooperation and political consultation under the leadership of the CPC avoids the drawbacks of the old political party system that stood for only a small number of people and interest groups. "When making decisions and exercising governance, political parties act in their own interests or the interests of the classes, regions and groups they represent, provoking division in society," the white paper said.

Growing from China's soil

The multiparty cooperation system is the result of long-term practice.

Most of the eight non-communist political parties were established during the Chinese People's War of Resistance Against Japanese Aggression and the War of Liberation in the 1930s and 1940s. They formed a progressive force which was anti-imperialist and patriotic and demanded democracy.

Founded in 1921, the CPC established and developed close relations of cooperation with the eight parties and joined forces with them to fight for the nation. They jointly launched movements against the Japanese invaders and later fought against the policy of dictatorship adopted, and the civil war instigated, by the Kuomintang regime under Chiang Kai-shek.

While leading the new democratic revolution to victory, the CPC established its core leadership role among the various revolutionary forces. And these parties and non-affiliates chose to follow the leadership of the CPC.

The convention of the First Plenary Session of the CPPCC in September 1949 marked the formal establishment of the multiparty cooperation system under the leadership of the CPC. Since then, the system has been continuously developed, playing a significant role in the nation's political and social life.

"This is a good political system that conforms to both China's national conditions and the people's will," Zheng Jianbang, Chairperson of the Central Committee of the RCCK, said. "Now, more than 70 years later, it's proved that the political party system does have its own unique advantages." **BR**

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Without Skipping a Stitch

NPC deputy brings ethnic craftsmanship from southwest China to a larger stage By Li Xiaoyang

The revered 20th century painter and art educator Liu Haisu once said: "As beautiful as the moon stitched with threads of clouds, Miao embroidery outshines the needlework of nature."

The embroidery of China's Miao minority, an ethnic group mainly residing in the country's southern regions, is a remarkable artistic tradition spanning 2,000 years and involving a myriad of complex stitches that lend it its unique features, which are very different from, for example, traditional Han Chinese embroidery.

Pan Yuzhen, a Miao embroidery artisan now well into her 70s, had almost never left her hometown in the southwestern province of Guizhou—until she met Beijing-based entrepreneur Xia Hua in 2003. When visiting the village where Pan lived, Xia promised to help promote the local embroidery works both at home and overseas. Years later, Xia delivered on her promise. She and Pan traveled to the capital of the United Kingdom where the artisan strutted down a London Fashion Week catwalk, fully decked out in her self-made Miao garments, to a storm of applause in 2017.

COURTESY PHOTO

Xia Hua (second left) and four Miao minority female embroiderers pose for a photo in London, the UK, in 2017

A beautiful discovery

Xia founded apparel company Eve Group in Beijing in 1994. Starting from 2003, the company has been exploring ways to promote the Miao embroidery of Guizhou beyond the remote mountains. "For this craftsmanship with a millennia-long history, we believe the best way to conservation is to revive it in contemporary ways," Xia told *Beijing Review*. As a deputy to the 14th National People's Congress (NPC), she has made suggestions on preserving ethnic craftsmanship and promoting the digital transformation of traditional industries.

The NPC is the highest state organ of power in China, composed of deputies elected from 35 electoral units. During the NPC, the annual legislative session that usually takes place in March, deputies like Xia discuss plans for national development and issues affecting people's lives. The suggestions they put forward are then submitted for meticulous review before being included in the policies of related state organs and government departments.

China's Miao population mostly concentrates in Guizhou, with the province's Jianhe County, where Pan lives, particularly known for its distinctive Miao embroidery styles. Most craftspeople are women.

According to Xia, Eve Group has integrated the Miao needlework into their products and by doing so improved the lives of its Guizhou-based artisans. It has boosted massive production, established a qualification management system and enhanced the embroidery's brand reputation.

Xia graduated from the Beijing-based China University of Political Science and Law, one of China's top law schools, in 1991 and then became a lecturer at the university. But only two years later, she surprised friend and foe when she quit her job and became a salesperson at a mall in Beijing. In those days, China's entrepreneurial scene was just sprouting and Xia had spotted an opportunity in the designing and selling of men's clothing. Without skipping a stitch, she dove in head first.

After she founded Eve Group, it soon evolved into a leading apparel company. She figured it should start exploring the crafts of the country's ethnic minorities. For good measure: China has 56 officially recognized ethnic groups. The largest is the Han Chinese, numbering more than 1.28 billion as of 2020, who reside in every region of the country. In 2003, Xia and her team of designers decided to travel to Guizhou, where the delicate embroidery patterns on local people's clothing and household articles left a lasting impression on her. But she soon realized the embroiderers were creating these works of art mainly for personal use instead of trade, stitching away in dim candlelight to save on electricity fees.

Xia also learned that many female embroiderers were forced to leave their hometowns to seek employment elsewhere as they could not rely on the embroidery to make ends meet in the remote mountains. The traditional craftsmanship was on the verge of being lost. She decided to integrate the artistry with Eve Group products, and set up workshops in Guizhou starting from 2003. Miao needlework aside, the company has also been promoting the folk handcrafts of other ethnic minorities, including the Yi and Bouyei. As of this year, it has established around 1,200 workshops across the remote mountains of southwest China and built factories near the embroiderers' homes.

The workshop has cooperated with more than 20,000 female embroiderers in Guizhou and several hundred of Eve Group's designers are based in the province to support the collaboration. "We have created a database with information on where they live, what needlework skills they master, what their works look like and how many hours they usually work per day," Xia said. The company has also provided training to help embroiderers hone their skills and create high-quality products.

Eve Group has also developed a database collecting over 8,000 traditional patterns of China's ethnic groups. Global designers can access it and then team up with the embroiderers through the company.

The artisans' creations adorn, for example, the company's high-heeled shoes, bags and notebooks. Skillful artisans can produce decorating patterns for six to eight notebooks per day, earning 80 yuan ($11.5) per pad.

After combining forces with Eve Group, Pan was invited to showcase her works in many countries including Singapore, the United States and France. In 2020, Pan's total earnings came close to 1.5 million yuan ($217,300). Her daughters and granddaughters, too, have become Miao embroidery artisans.

While being able to take care of their children at home, instead of having to leave them in the care of others as they seek employment elsewhere, female embroiderers carry forward the age-old techniques, maintaining their ethnic identity and creating a better life for the next generation. The industry drives rural development, promotes common prosperity and means a lot for cultural inheritance, Xia said.

First practice, then propose

In recent years, the promotion of Miao embroidery skills has become a hot topic during NPC sessions. Shi Liping, a Miao embroidery artisan and a deputy to the 13th NPC (2018-22), called for the encouragement of Miao embroidery during her term. As a deputy to the 14th NPC, Xia has come up with a host of new suggestions based on her professional experience.

This year, she suggested preserving ethnic culture through digital methods. According to her, the database of Eve Group, for example, has attracted many young designers in pursuit of inspiration and offering to create customized designs better catering to contemporary consumer preferences.

Xia expects the government to develop Miao embroidery industry clusters across Guizhou to empower the crafts workers, and women in particular, establish rural demonstration zones and endorse teamwork between government, enterprises and embroiderers. "Government policy support is crucial for leading enterprises to play a key role in rural development," she said.

According to Xia, the apparel and fabric industry is a traditional one, while Eve Group has been exploring digital transformation to adapt to market changes, for example by introducing a digital platform for customers to try on clothes through virtual reality technologies.

"It took six years for Eve Group's industrial upgrading to come full circle. For small and medium-sized enterprises, making big changes can prove very difficult when they can only rely on themselves," Xia said.

As Xia proposed, the government needs to step up support for traditional industries, specifically with regards to digital transformation and business mode innovation. The government and financial institutions should improve their communication with enterprises and provide both policy and financial support.

Xia is set on introducing Chinese culture to global consumers. Eve Group has hosted hundreds of offline fairs, i.e., the Remote Mountain Bazaars, in domestic commercial hubs like Beijing and Shanghai as well as in global fashion capitals, including Paris and London, to present the crafts of the country's ethnic minorities and show how they are made on site to attract consumers.

Starting from earlier this year, service consumption has swiftly rebounded but the recovery of goods consumption is taking longer, Xia added. "But our brick-and-mortar stores have seen increased foot traffic. I believe consumption will make a notable comeback this year," she concluded. **BR**

XINHUA

Miao embroiderers showcase their craftsmanship at a Remote Mountain Bazaar hosted by Eve Group at a Beijing mall in 2019

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Keeping Sight Of the Goal

China's medical aid to Guyana through the eyes of an ophthalmologist

By Xu Bei

For Chinese ophthalmologist Shi Yu, the Latin American country of Guyana offers many new experiences.

"This was my first time taking a plane to go and offer medical services in Guyana, and the destination was Lethem," she wrote. Located on the southwestern border, the city, the largest in south Guyana, is close to Brazil and most locals speak Portuguese. "So it also became my first time using a translation app to communicate with patients," she explained on her Weixin Moments, the ubiquitous Chinese super app's Instagram-like feed, on February 26.

The doctor from Nanjing Drum Tower Hospital in Jiangsu Province in east China is a member of China's 18th batch of medical teams dispatched to Guyana more than four months ago.

Nearly 600 km from Guyana's capital Georgetown, Lethem is underdeveloped in terms of economy and healthcare. Given the lack of medical sources, even patients who suffer from common diseases cannot receive effective or prompt treatment.

Invited by the local government, the medical team arrived in Lethem on February 24 to offer two-day free medical services starting from their day of arrival. Their services included general surgery, traditional Chinese medicine treatment and acupuncture, obstetrics and gynecology, and pediatrics. They also donated dozens of commonly prescribed medicines to residents.

In addition to providing medical services in Lethem and treating patients at hospitals in Georgetown and Linden, they also trained their Guyanan counterparts there. After all, "teaching someone to fish is better than catching the fish for them," Shi told *Beijing Review*.

COURTESY PHOTO

Shi Yu, an ophthalmologist and a member of China's 18th batch of medical teams dispatched to Guyana, poses for a picture with local children visiting the team's temporary residence in the capital city of Georgetown

This year marks the 60th anniversary of China sending its first medical aid team overseas, as well as the 30th anniversary of Chinese doctors saving lives in Guyana. Since 1963, China has dispatched 18 medical teams to the country with 263 members who assisted their Guyanan peers at medical institutions such as Georgetown Public Hospital Corp. "This year was a significant one in China's history of medical assistance and I've been lucky to be part of that story," Shi said.

"Helping others made me happy," Shi said. And so, in that same spirit, she signed up to join the medical team to Guyana, hoping to bring health to people living in the tropical rainforest in the southern hemisphere.

"When local patients gradually recover and express their gratitude with a simple thumbs up, happiness replaces homesickness," she added. **BR**

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An Air of Coastal Cool

Xiamen City overflows with laid-back vibes and young prowess

By Elsbeth van Paridon

With sprawling views of lush green gardens and the distant glistening of sunlight dancing on the harbor's deep waters, Xiamen University, located in the eponymous city in the southeastern province of Fujian, possesses what is arguably one of the most beautiful college campuses in all of China. Crisscrossing the site, if you squint—and give your imagination full rein—you just might be able to envisage yourself sauntering along Hollywood's Sunset Boulevard.

Marnix Groot, a Dutch airport development expert, who spent almost a decade living and working in China—and who is also a dear friend of this author—studied at the renowned institution in 2003 and reminisces fondly of his time spent there.

"Mind you, this was 2003. China wasn't exactly 'in the picture' the way it is today," Groot told *Beijing Review*. "Till then, my travels had always taken me across the Atlantic; I had not yet set foot in Asia. So when I got the opportunity to go study in China, my first choice was to go to Beijing. But as that spot had already been scooped up, I opted for the next (and only) one on offer: Xiamen University—or *Xia Da*. Foreigners were, as was to be expected, few and far between there. When I first landed, I couldn't even pronounce the word 'Xiamen'," Groot added, laughing.

Twenty years have gone by since the Dutch airport aficionado set out on his first China voyage and times have certainly changed in Xiamen—and in China as a whole. But some things have stayed the same: The city still bursts with color and verve by day, its high-rises light up the urban nightscape and its picturesque traditions are woven through the old port at all times.

Salon talk

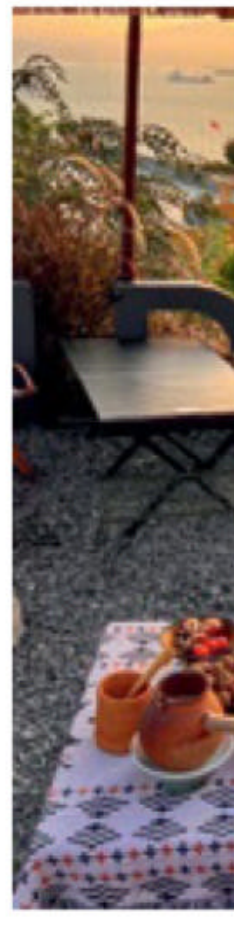
This brings us back to *Xia Da*. On February 26, this particular beacon of education and tradition served as the home to a salon centered on youth power in the process of modernization. The meeting was part of the Global Young Leaders Dialogue (GYLD) China Tour—Xiamen. The GYLD is a program that regularly takes international participants on tours of different regions across China to offer them the chance to gain a more in-depth understanding of the country.

This time around, a group of international youth from eight countries visited the tropical port city from February 25 to 27.

"Young power can light a fire within society and lend it an increased sense of open-mindedness, which in turn will lead to innovation and thus modernization," Yu Yunquan, President of the Academy of Contemporary China and World Studies, an affiliate of China International Communications Group, said in his opening address at the meeting. Liu Yue, Vice Dean of the Foreign Languages School at Xiamen University, chimed in with a more specific example of cultural connection, delving into the topic of tea.

"Tea has enabled us to sip across continents and eras for almost two centuries, ever since Xiamen Port first welcomed international traders in the early 19th century," Liu said, adding, "The English word 'tea' itself is actually a transliteration of the word in a southern Chinese dialect. Tea is just one example of how cultural and youth exchanges and intercultural communication have had a great effect on global development historically."

ELSBETH VAN PARIDON



(Left) Students stroll along a palm-lined avenue on the Xiamen University campus, in the eponymous city in coastal Fujian Province on February 26

A user shares a picture of an idyllic-looking seaside stove-boiled tea party in Xiamen, captioning it "Stove-boiled tea in Xiamen is just so very cosy and enjoyable," on popular lifestyle app Xiaohongshu

SCREENSHOT

At the heart of Xiamen's extensive and well-documented tea culture, you will find *gongfu* tea, which is actually not a tea blend but a ritual for brewing tea leaves.

And so, taking a leaf out of Liu's book, this author, who usually looks at China through the lens of fashion and urban culture, wants to elaborate a little on the topic of tea, pouring in the element of China's new youth and their latest lifestyle pursuits.

Spilling the tea

Today, stove-boiled tea (or *weiluzhucha* in Chinese) is one of the latest slow-living trends among young Chinese. The reason it has been gaining such popularity, apart from its embodiment of traditional Chinese tea culture, is that the activity is in line with young people's pursuit of a sense of ritual and reflects their aspirations to return to a more laidback, natural, sustainable lifestyle.

As the name suggests, the activity refers to lightly roasting tea leaves before boiling them in a pot on a charcoal-filled stove.

Brewing one's own tea is commonly seen as something people aged 50 and above do in China, whereas younger generations prefer bubble tea or coffee. The *weiluzhucha* trend, which first gained traction on Chinese social media late last year, represents the revival of Chinese tea culture among Chinese youngsters yearning to slow down the hectic pace of their everyday (urban) lives.

Lifestyle app Xiaohongshu (Little Red Book) had featured over 790,000 notes on the topic as of March 8, as well as over 19,000 related products, like the actual small stove, for sale. The tag "Enjoying stove-boiled tea in Xiamen" accounted for tens of thousands of the notes.

And as one of the birthplaces of *gongfu* tea, Xiamen serves up the perfect blend of quintessential tea culture and coastal chill. Recent months have seen more and more young travelers flocking to the old port, eager to indulge in its many delights, including seaside stove-boiled tea parties, after China lifted its domestic travel restrictions in late 2022.

It's hot, it's cool

Xiamen's youthful prowess doesn't end with a cuppa. The city has been a key import and export hub since the 1500s and became even more vital following its designation as one of China's first four special economic zones in 1980. For good measure: A special economic zone is an area of China with economic policies that aim to attract foreign investment.

Since the early 2010s, slowly transforming into an enclave mixing urban energy and laid-back vibes, the city began emerging as a magnet for bon ton travelers and art devotees alike, with many young creatives looking to leave behind the chaos and competition of, let's say, Shanghai and Beijing in favor of a breezier, coastal lifestyle. In 2017, CNN even hailed Xiamen as China's "new capital of cool."

Its laid-back rhythm gives, for example, young fashion designers a more relaxed environment to build their work at their own pace, facing less pressure and competition than they would in a larger metropolis.

Top designers like Sankuanz, known for his eccentric and extravagant art approach to design, or cutting-edge brands like deepmoss, the embodiment of a rational yet romantic aesthetic, decided to set up shop in the city years ago.

The local government, too, has demonstrated a passion for fashion and has been issuing fashion-forward initiatives over the past decade, including reduced studio and operational costs. Xiamen's proximity to the country's southern textile belt also doesn't hurt when you're in the business of dressing people.

Nor does having a lively contemporary arts scene right next door, i.e., the Shapowei Art Zone, a historical shelter wharf. Beginning its transformation into an area filled with artist studios, a skate park and boutiques in the mid-2010s, it sits at the heart of local youth culture, with a sense of old and new clashing to perfection.

So what does a typical afternoon at Shapowei look like? Watching the skaters perform their tricks, wandering along the wharf and popping into a few art studios and handcraft workshops. Or you can just sit outside and take in the harbor views in the company of a pour-over coffee or a craft beer. Or a cup of stove-boiled tea—served with an air of coastal cool. **BR**

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Notes on a Life

How one Cuban violinist uses the strings to tell stories By Magdalena Rojas

An extensive musical journey has taken Ivet Curbelo onto multiple stages and into many genres, offering Chinese audiences nationwide a chance to enjoy her melodies.

Although the Cuban singer and violinist has spent 20-plus years—roughly half her life—in China, the country did not feature in her original life blueprint. The opportunity presented itself with the opening of the first Argentine restaurant in Shanghai. The owners were looking to set their dining experience to a vibrant soundtrack and traveled to Cuba in search of a band that would fit the bill. "I didn't think there was room for Latino culture in a country with so much traditional culture," Curbelo admitted, quickly adding "but the proposal to be a violinist in a traditional Cuban group seemed like a fantastic opportunity to get to know this beautiful country."

Hitting new octaves

After her contract with the Cuban band with which she'd arrived ended, Curbelo, who was trained in classical violin at the National School of Arts in Havana, joined a Colombian band. But Curbelo wanted to be more than just part of an ensemble and decided to jump octaves. And so, pursuing a career as an independent artist, she returned to Shanghai. It was there, she said, that she began approaching other musical genres and acquainted herself with pop and jazz.

This musical journey took her all across China—touring, recording and even producing music for famous brands. Among her most memorable moments, Curbelo listed the opening of the World Expo 2010 in Shanghai, where she had the opportunity to share the stage with the famous Italian tenor Andrea Bocelli and most of the foreign artists based in Shanghai. "This type of event always comes with a large professional cast, great production, a lot of dedication and rehearsal—all very rewarding for the artist," she pointed out.

When asked what a typical week in her life looked like before the COVID-19 pandemic erupted in early 2020, she replied, "A musician's week is never normal." In addition to a busy schedule, each day differs from the last, there are weeks with meetings or long rehearsals during the day and a show that same night. "And there are those times when demand is low, giving you more time to hone your craft, record or visit the shows of fellow musicians," she detailed.

Finally, there are those really intense weeks, where every day brings a different show in a different city, which means constantly getting on trains or planes, sleeping very little and only being able to rest once back home. Even so, this is Curbelo's passion. In that sense, she believes China has provided fertile ground for her artistic development, presenting her with numerous platforms to showcase her talent. "One of the best things Shanghai has to offer is the opportunity to make a good living by performing music, something you can't easily achieve in Europe or America," she highlighted.

Currently, Curbelo's performances see her slaying the violin as well as singing, while the latter actually arose from her need to set new goals. "Musician friends gave me the opportunity to learn and improve myself by

Shanghai-based Cuban violinist Ivet Curbelo has been living and working in China since 2001, performing across numerous cities and venues

COURTESY PHOTO

singing in their bands or projects," she recalled. But it doesn't end there.

The Cuban now not only sings in her native Spanish, but also in other languages, including standard Chinese. "I sing in several languages because I have projects of different styles; singing in Chinese is always the most difficult but also the most rewarding. The public loves to hear a foreign artist sing in their language."

The learning curve is one of the things in China, especially in Shanghai, that Curbelo truly appreciates. "I have been able to make music from multiple countries, from Mexican mariachis, Bavarian, Irish, and Italian music bands, participating in a cappella vocal groups with European artists, and even playing with traditional Chinese instruments," she said. "It's satisfying to be called up for a show of any kind and you already have the experience and can say 'sure I can'!"

An artist's heart

Curbelo was born and raised in Santa Clara, a small Cuban city of approximately half a million inhabitants and famous for its revolutionary relics as well as housing the remains of Che Guevara and other revolutionary combatants. Later, she moved to Havana to continue her studies, where she was first part of student musical ensembles and later played in popular Cuban bands.

There are many things that she misses about Cuba, such as the weather, the beaches, the people's unadulterated *joie de vivre*, the musical environment and, of course, her family. "There, I was born. There, my most beautiful childhood and adolescence memories will always be," she said. For this reason, whenever possible, Curbelo inserts Cuban songs into her shows to "bring the country's rhythm to the Chinese public, as well as to not forget her roots and feel a little closer to Cuba."

But in China, the Cuban virtuoso also became a mother and created her own home. "Here, I feel at home, not because of the time I've already spent here, but because it's easy to adapt," she said.

During her two decades in the country, the Cuban has witnessed the impressive changes and economic development that have propelled China. "Shanghai is a magnificent city and I have had the opportunity to see it grow over these past 20 years," she said. "I would say that they are two different cities, the one to which I arrived and the current one; but both are equally beautiful."

The pandemic, however, has not been easy for musicians and artists like Curbelo, who have been affected by the closure of venues, the suspension of events and other pandemic control policies.

"I miss the many opportunities China has always given foreign musicians and the movement that existed in pre-pandemic times," she confessed. However, this has not been a reason to sit idle. "For me personally, now that I am a mother, I choose to dedicate myself to my young daughter and try to continue making music in small projects and at some very specific events," she explained. In addition, Curbelo now practices more at home, constantly listening to music and continuing that learning curve.

This maestro is one of those people always looking for new horizons. **BR**

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中国儿童少年基金会
CHINA CHILDREN AND TEENAGERS' FUND

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SPRING BUD PROJECT

TOGETHER LET'S HELP LITTLE FLOWERS BLOSSOM

An Affair to Remember

Capturing the creations and inspirations of a Chinese painter

By Tao Xing

It was a day like so many others in Maqu County of Gannan Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture in Gansu Province in 1979. A Tibetan woman was guiding her cow through the alpine wetland landscape when Wu Xi, in active search of inspiration, spotted the pair and penciled a quick sketch. Decades on, 79-year-old Wu's eyes still light up with excitement when talking about this particular painting.

"Look how I captured the expression on her facial profile—and I did so in just a few minutes," Wu, a professional painter at Beijing Fine Art Academy, told *Beijing Review*.

Born into a notable and art-loving family in Suzhou, Jiangsu Province, in 1943, Wu was imperceptibly influenced by her surroundings. One of her forefathers, Wu Dacheng (1835-1902), was a renowned calligrapher and painter. Her father, Wu Hewang, had studied painting under Wu Hufan (1894–1968), a leading Chinese painter known as a collector and art connoisseur as well as for his landscape works. Zha Fuxi (1895-1976), an acclaimed master of the *guqin*, a plucked seven-string Chinese musical instrument, was a regular visitor to the Wu family home. When Wu Xi was 8, the Wu and Zha households jointly moved to Beijing, where the young girl took her first tentative steps into the world of painting.

At the very beginning, Wu was learning how to draw and paint by herself. "I've liked painting since childhood," she said. Her father noticed her gift for the arts and got her a host of related books through which Wu began building and stretching her own professional canvas, including both Chinese and Western styles such as the works of Ilya Yefimovich Repin, a remarkable figure of Russian Realism during the 19th century.

"The artistic and literary inspirations aside, there was this Soviet Union documentary novel called *The Early Sunrise*, which told the story of a young painter who died at the age of 15," Wu said, adding the book inspired many children immersed in the fine arts at the time.

She later enrolled at the Beijing Industrial Art School, known today as the

TAO XING

A collection of Wu Xi's quick sketches over the decades

WEI YAO

The Dim Light of the Night, one of Wu's most revered works to date

College of Art and Design at the Beijing University of Technology, to study sculpture and painting. After graduation, Wu worked at an institute designing product packaging for several years and following her stint there, finally entered the Beijing Fine Art Academy in 1978 with a recommendation letter from Zhou Sicong (1939-96), a famous Chinese female painter.

A creative explorer

"When studying at the Beijing Industrial Art School, we got quick sketch homework every week," Wu said, adding this would always get her creative juices (over)flowing. If the teacher told them to do 10 drawings, she would hand in 20.

And her proclivity for quick sketching persists to this day. "Compared to, for example, an object sketch, it better trains you as you need to wholly capture the subject and finish it in minutes," she said.

When designing packaging at the institute, Wu would hone her painting skills during the weekend. She would even show up on the doorsteps of Li Kuchan (1899-1983), a famous painter known for combining Western techniques with traditional Chinese styles, and Ye Qianyu (1907-95), an influential painter and cartoonist best known for his *manhua* (caricatures), to show them her works and get some constructive feedback. The masters were both moved by her imaginative spirit and talent and agreed to guide her through her artistic exploration.

"Wu is an outstanding painter," Li once said.

Her unswerving pursuit of the fine arts over the years ensured Wu built a solid foundation in painting. More specifically, her training in Western styles allowed her to enhance her traditional Chinese creations. For example, mastering the art of the quick sketch helped her seize the most fleeting moments of daily life or a person, in turn enriching her endeavors in the realm of Chinese painting—which traditionally focuses on the opposite, namely, classic, fixed subjects or static gestures.

WEI YAO

A vibrantly colored Chinese ink painting by Wu

Also of note here has been Wu's enduring and adamant opposition to the inflexible pursuit of the classical and the blind copying of foreign artists.

"In Chinese ink painting, for example, I will use more color, a kind of 'breakthrough' compared with its traditional black and white palette," Wu said. But blindly injecting the old with something new is not the way to revolutionize art. "First, I need to improve my basic skills, for example, the sculpting ability, day by day, year by year," she added.

A cultural carrier

Wu's works have been exhibited both at home and abroad, meeting with widespread acclaim.

One of her most representative work to date, *The Dim Light of the Night*, was displayed at the 1989 Monte Carlo International Exhibition of Modern Art in Monaco. It was branded one of the exhibit's 200 masterpieces, chosen from over 8,000 paintings by 2,000 artists from 68 countries.

"In *Night*, a crescent moon hangs in the boundless night sky in which floats a few thin clouds; inverted reflections are seen in the limpid, quiet river water, and a tall tree stands tall on the bank. What a moving picture this is!" Zhao Mingzhen, a Chinese art critic, described the creation.

Then Indian President Ramaswamy Venkataraman, during a visit to Beijing, met with Wu and her artist husband He Yang at the Diaoyutai State Guesthouse on May 18, 1992, and gladly accepted the paintings they presented to him.

Late German collector Peter Ludwig bought eight of Wu's paintings in 1996. That same year, Ludwig and his wife Irene also donated 89 artworks from their collection to the National Art Museum of China, as a demonstration of the Sino-German friendship.

In 1995, Wu and He founded the first private modern painting museum in China—the Heyang Wuxi Modern Painting Museum in Beijing. Today, the museum not only displays the couple's works, but also organizes different types of international art communication and public training events to promote Chinese paintings.

Even on the verge of becoming an octogenarian, Wu's passion for painting remains strong as ever. "Painting is not a part of my life; it is my life," she concluded. Theirs truly is an affair to remember. **BR**

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Ancient Archives

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The oracle bone script, inscribed on pieces of bone or tortoise shell used for divination in the Shang Dynasty (1600-1046 B.C.), is the earliest known form of Chinese writing. Juyan Hanjian is a collection of wood and bamboo slips recording texts from the Han Dynasty (206 B.C.-A.D. 220) unearthed in the ruins of the ancient town of Juyan, Inner Mongolia Autonomous Region.

The Dunhuang Manuscripts are a variety of religious and secular documents drafted between the fifth and 11th centuries and found at the Mogao Grottoes in Dunhuang, Gansu Province. The archives of the Ming (1368-1644) and Qing (1644-1911) dynasties are the most complete archives of ancient Chinese dynasties that have ever been recovered.

These four cultural heritage items, all discovered in the early 20th century, have long been scattered across different museums and academies. They were rounded up in an exhibition that opened at the National Museum of Classic Books in Beijing on February 15, giving visitors a chance to appreciate ancient Chinese culture spanning 3,000 years. **BR**

(*Text and photos by Wei Yao*)

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1. Characters inscribed on a piece of bone during the Shang Dynasty (1600-1046 B.C.) remain recognizable

2. A Qing Dynasty (1644-1911) scroll announcing the names of those who passed the imperial examination

3. The character for bird in the oracle bone script

4. Enlarged replicas of Juyan Hanjian examples, texts recorded on slips of wood and bamboo during the Han Dynasty (206 B.C.-A.D. 220)

5. Paintings discovered among the Dunhuang Manuscripts

Smart Watches: Benefiting or Manipulating Children?

In recent years, smart watches for kids have been gaining popularity with children and parents alike in China, thanks to their many useful features. Currently, 30 percent of Chinese children aged between 5 and 12 have a smart watch, and this proportion is much higher among urban children.

LI SHIGONG

Although children's smart watches do help parents locate their children and contact them, which is usually the reason parents buy them in the first place, hidden concerns about these watches have gradually been brought into the spotlight. Numerous smart watch features not only distract children's attention from schooling, but also lure them into making unnecessary purchases and put their privacy at risk.

Lu Na (www.thepaper.cn): Smart watches are not necessarily the monsters in this situation. They make life more convenient for both children and parents. They also provide opportunities for children to have fun and interact with each other. However, smart watches are also a source of privacy risks and security concerns.

Children tend to leak their personal information more easily than adults, leading to security issues. Additionally, pornographic and violent content is spread on child smart watches, which damages children's mental health. Also, children might be subject to online bullying in this digital world for kids.

Given these challenges, manufacturers are obligated to design smart watches that are safe for children to use. Instead of adding a wide range of features to the watches, producers should focus on basic functions that children are really in need of and can depend on.

Zhang Zhiquan (szb.northnews.cn): Child smart watches make it possible for parents to know their children's whereabouts at all times and to contact them, so they are happy to give them to their children. But gradually, they are losing control of how their kids use their watches. The danger increases as children add more and more people to buddy lists on the watches. At the same time, children are distracted by the many fun features the watches display on their screens. Excessive time spent on smart watches also leads to health risks such as poorer eyesight and sleep deprivation. Children might also be lured into making purchases and their leaked personal information may be taken advantage of by users with bad intentions.

Children are the future of a nation. There must be a firewall against potential harms stemming from smart watches. Related authorities should also upgrade efforts to clamp down on misdoings like exposing child users' privacy and feeding them inappropriate information. If properly designed and used, child smart watches can play the helpful role parents expect them to play.

Zhang Chunyi (www.cqn.com.cn): Originally, smart watches for kids only had simple but useful functions, like locating children and basic communication. Nowadays, however, smart watches are being increasingly embraced by children as they have functions like taking photos, accessing the Internet, playing games, chatting online and even paying online. Particularly, as smartphones are now forbidden on campuses, smart watches have become the only electronic products for communication allowed on school grounds.

Behind the huge market of child smart watches hides a chaotic scene. Some watches can host dozens of apps, including gaming apps, fueling children's addiction to games. Some apps allow password-free payment and, as a result, parents pay for whatever their children purchase on their smart watches without even knowing it. Worse still, with the help of some apps, criminals can retrieve watch users' location histories, facial images and sound recordings.

Children are not yet intellectually mature and therefore unable to control their own behaviors effectively. So parents and teachers must monitor children's smart watch usage to prevent them from doing real damage. **BR**

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